

SPECIAL ECOLOGY ISSUE

July 28-August 10, 1997

IN THESE TIMES

Confronted with grim political realities,
environmentalists
are getting

DOWN
&
dirty

David Helvarg "Wise use" militarism

Salim Muwakkil The environmental justice movement

William Sanjour The EPA's contempt for activists

Jeffrey St. Clair The twilight of "Gang Green"

Bob Wages The greening of labor

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EDITORIAL

NATO REARMS THE WORLD

The expansion of NATO, agreed upon at a summit meeting in Madrid on June 8, comes at a time when the Cold War is barely a memory and when there is no military threat to any of NATO's members—indeed, when such a threat is almost unimaginable. Why, then, are the existing 16 member nations eagerly pursuing expansion, and why are Eastern European countries clamoring to get in?

The second question is easier to answer than the first. The three countries invited to join NATO at the Madrid meeting—Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary—all have histories of fighting off incursions from the East. Poland, in particular, has been the victim of Russian, and later Soviet, expansion. From the 16th century, when Catherine the Great took much of what is now Ukraine from Poland-Lithuania, to the Soviet absorption of much of eastern Poland during and after World War II, Poles have been victimized by Russia. So, in more recent times, have the Hungarians. The Soviets annexed Hungary's trans-Carpathian territories after World War II and suppressed the country's democratic revolution in 1956. The Czechs had their own democratic revolution crushed by Soviet troops in 1968.

The people of these countries, especially Poland, still fear Russia, while for their leaders, NATO membership promises a massive infusion of modern military technology as well as integration into the highly developed European economy. Even so, only in Poland does a large majority of the population support joining NATO. According to recent opinion polls, 88 percent of Poles favor joining the alliance. By contrast, only 47 percent of Hungarians and 40 percent of Czechs do.

Western leaders say that enlarging NATO to include the nations of Eastern Europe will promote "stability" and reinforce the commitment to open markets—and to the

demands made by the World Bank and IMF for financial "responsibility," meaning Western-style austerity.

But if we have learned anything over the past 50 years, it is that larger and more heavily armed military forces serve only to destabilize regions. And the bottom line of NATO expansion is a vast expansion of militarization throughout Eastern Europe since NATO requires member countries to buy Western weapons and equipment.

Aside from the threat to stability that larger and better equipped armies present in themselves, there are two other aspects of NATO expansion that undermine all the rhetoric about how this move will foster the

protection of democracy.

First, there is the huge cost. The Poles, Czechs and Hungarians will have to put pressing social needs aside and come up with part of the hundreds of billions of dollars that it will cost to replace the obsolete Warsaw Pact equipment they now use. The State Department estimates that the new nations' share of the total cost will be a mere \$13 billion over the next 12 years. This figure is a gross underestimation designed to sell NATO expansion to the U.S. Senate, which must approve the new members. Even an outlay of \$13 billion, however, would impose a terrible burden on the

three new invited members. To give an idea, Poland, which has the strongest economy and highest growth rate of the three, was recently forced to cut military equipment purchases in half because it couldn't afford them. In any event, current NATO members, especially the United States, will end up paying at least half the cost of the modernization. That means, of course, that the American people will pay to rearm these three countries, and eventually most of Eastern Europe, if NATO expansion continues.

And who will benefit from this massive rearmament effort? Who will receive the lucrative contracts and cost overruns for all these modern guns, tanks and aircraft? You guessed it: the giant military suppliers, mostly American, whose welfare the

Clinton administration and Congress have assiduously protected and enhanced.

If the Clinton administration was truly interested in stabilizing Europe and the rest of the world, it would move toward a dissolution, not an enlargement, of NATO. It would end the proliferation of international armaments. And it would allow the newly independent nations of Eastern Europe to develop in their own way, rather than imposing on them "market reforms" designed only to benefit corporate America. ◀

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IN THESE TIMES
 "...with liberty and justice for all"

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InTHESETIMES

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LETTERS

Now playing on tape

Jonathan Rosenbaum's "Not playing in a theater near you" (March 31) rang true for my husband and me. The movie *I'm Not Rappaport* opened in several cities in January, but disappeared before reaching others, including our Cincinnati area.

We waited impatiently for the movie because it begins by depicting Clara Lemlich (my husband's aunt) calling out for a New York garment workers' strike in 1910. We have read books about her and visited her in a California nursing home where she was rallying the aides to unionize. The movie character played by Walter Matthau, a child in that historic scene, was so impressed by the fiery union leader that he devoted his life to social causes.

Finally, in June, without any promotion, the movie was shown in Cincinnati at an arthouse theater. It is also now available on video. Though

inspirational, *I'm Not Rappaport* is a comedy following the old character's attempts later in life to right contemporary wrongs. I believe readers of *ITT* would enjoy it.

Elizabeth Murphy Lemlich
Bellevue, Ky.

Tort prevention

Ron Bigler's article on tort reform ("Punitive tort reform," June 30) overlooked two big points. First, a \$250,000 cap on punitive damages will keep cases of personal injury out of court. A lawyer's fee is 40 percent of this \$250,000, from which he must pay all expenses and employ high-priced expert witnesses. Second, tort reform effectively deregulates corporations, freeing them to cut any corners and to take any risks in their quest for greater profits.

Here's a case in point. In 1993, the Food and Drug Administration's panel on over-the-counter drugs found that

acetaminophen taken with alcohol caused liver disease, even when taken in recommended dosages. The FDA instructed manufacturers to put a warning label on their products. McNeil Laboratories, the makers of Tylenol, have a 30 percent share of the over-the-counter pain reliever market with their acetaminophen product. Here in California in 1996, they finally complied with the FDA directive and put a warning label on their products. When the state legislature passed a product liability law that put a cap on damages, McNeil Laboratories took the warning labels off.

Corporations can't be trusted to do the right thing. If you'd like to know the dangers of acetaminophen, ask the American Liver Foundation for a copy of the clinical review, "Acetaminophen, a failed treatment."

Tom Freeman
Colton, Calif.

Burned

Neither the readers of the mainstream media nor—unfortunately—readers of *ITT* learned the truth about the McDonald's coffee case.

Ron Bigler fails to point out that the medical bills of the woman who "spilled a cup of coffee" exceeded \$29,000 and that McDonald's had previously had more than 700 similar serious hot coffee complaints.

The punitive damages the jury imposed equaled a mere two days' profits from McDonald's coffee sales.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



A comparable punitive fine for a family with an annual income of \$36,000 would be less than \$300.

Bill Hay
Ruidoso, N.M.

Staying alive

Your recent food issue (May 26) covered many of the problems that I'm concerned with as an organic farmer. I want to know my customers and be responsible to them. I do not want my produce going into the corporate-controlled pool of food that fills our supermarkets. I do not want to get rich farming, but rather to make a living and produce food that I am proud to sell. In our society, food has become nothing more than a commodity, like labor and consumer goods, that corporations use to fatten their bottom line.

Buying organic food can make our food system more sustainable and friendly. But an organic label does not tell the whole story. Many large multinational corporations are investing in organic agriculture not because they care but because they see it as another opportunity to cash in. Mexican companies that grow organic strawberries may exploit laborers just as conventional agriculture does. Can organic foods shipped thousands of miles be considered sustainable? Can organic pork raised in confinement or beef that has never been on pasture be considered sustainable?

Why should people be forced to buy food produced in an unsustainable manner? As a food consumer, you need to ask some questions: How was your food produced? Is it locally grown? Is it in season? Is it highly processed? Does the farmer get a fair price? Questions like these will help to change our food system to one that is controlled by farmers and consumers and protects the environment. Real food should give us a better life, not just keep us alive.

James P. Goodman
Wonewoc, Wis.



We're taking a break

Warren Berger, a former chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, customarily vacationed for two months each year on Martha's Vineyard. One day a reporter asked the justice how the court could recess two months each year, given the size and complexity of the United States.

"The court can do a year's work in 10 months," Berger reportedly replied, "but not in 12."

Periods of rest, reflection, retrenchment and renewal are as necessary for magazines—and the people who work for them—as they are for Supreme Court justices.

We at *In These Times* are taking a break during the month of August to immerse ourselves in editorial and strategic planning.

The magazine is on the threshold of a very exciting future. We have a new publisher who is committed to putting us on firmer financial footing. We are hiring a new art director who will help give us a long-overdue face-lift. And we're working on the launch of a new Web page, which will combine the best of *In These Times* with other dynamic features not found in the publication.

The last issue that subscribers will receive before our hiatus will be dated August 11-25. The break will not affect the number of issues that a subscriber receives. We'll return refreshed and with a new look with the September 22-October 5 issue. We'll see you then.

James Weinstein
Editor

InSHORT



Fight for the forest, Part II

If federal forest managers in the Northwest thought logging protests would cool down after the federal government withdrew last year's salvage timber rider, they're in for a disappointment. In fact, the move has spurred a new wave of forest organizing that shows no signs of letting up.

Since the logging season began in spring, a coordinated regional campaign has coalesced under the banner "Cascadia Summer." Five direct-action base camps have been set up in Northern California, Oregon and Washington, from which protesters are mounting blockades and staging sorties into logging sites. Dozens of protesters have already been arrested.

Whereas last year's protests were largely a reaction to the

rider, which suspended environmental laws in federal forests, organizers hope to use Cascadia Summer to rally support for two anti-clearcutting initiatives being proposed for the Oregon ballot (which would apply to private and state lands) and for a "zero cut" bill to end logging on federal forests altogether, which the Sierra Club plans to have introduced in Congress this summer.

Meant to recall '60s freedom rider summers, Cascadia Summer already bears one unfortunate resemblance: a disturbing pattern of semi-official violence. Some of the worst incidents have occurred on the China Left site in southern Oregon, where loggers have been cutting above one of the region's healthiest runs of the endangered coho salmon. During one demonstration at the site, Forest Service law enforcement officers let loggers operate a chainsaw two feet away from protesters. A slip could have caused serious injury. Loggers also attacked Sierra Club member Tim Ream as he videotaped the incident, destroying his camera. Six protesters were arrested, but no loggers were. Immediately afterwards, one of the officers screamed at the protesters, "Now we're going to come down hard. I'm going to turn these fuckers loose on you guys any way and every way, and somebody is going to get killed! Do you understand? I ain't going to give a fuck."

Forest advocate Frances Eatherington, one of those arrested at China Left, reported being brutalized at a jail in Grants Pass, Ore. "While I was getting my picture taken, the officer came over to me as if to adjust

my position, and instead smashed the back of my head up against a cement-block wall," she says. "I got my head smashed against the wall at least once, and likely more. I cannot remember clearly. I was semi-conscious and was revived by something that left a burn under my nose." Eatherington was released after 18 hours in solitary confinement. A doctor diagnosed her with a concussion.

During protests at the Sphinx timber sale in the Willamette National Forest, a Forest Service truck clipped a protester, and a logging truck ran through a road barrier put up by several protesters, who managed to get clear in time. The timber sale is controversial because the forest is in

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Salem, Ore.'s watershed. Salem had to ration its water in February 1996 after storms caused mud slides on clearcut land, dirtying the town's water supply. In April, Salem Mayor George Swaim joined a protest at the site and called for civil disobedience.

The wave of violence seems to indicate that loggers and government officials are becoming unnerved by the prospect of major protests for a second year in a row. Ironically, that may help Cascadia Summer gather steam.

"Folks now see what they're doing as part of a whole," says Joe Keating of Witness Against Lawless Logging, one of the leading groups in the Cascadia Summer coalition. "That's important because it can get pretty lonely when you're out sitting in a tree."

—Patrick Mazza

Just blew it

Stung by lurid accounts in the Western press of the dark, satanic mills operated by its overseas subcontractors, Nike decided early this year to make a clean breast of it. The footwear company sent former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young to Indonesia, China and Vietnam to investigate allegations that its workers earn starvation wages, are intimidated from organizing unions and suffer occasional physical abuse.

Young dropped the ball—or he threw the game, depending on which sports metaphor you prefer. A novice in the realm of global labor and economics, Young obligingly toured Asian factories at Nike's expense and didn't even hire his own translators to interview workers (he instead used Nike officials as go-betweens). His wishy-washy report, released on June 24, predictably failed to engage even the least controversial, albeit crucial, allegation that Nike's factory hands are paid unconscionably low wages. Try as he might, Young found no evidence of a "pattern of widespread or systematic abuse or mistreatment of workers." While admitting that he may have overlooked an abuse here and there, the former civil rights leader explained that Asians have "no concept of worker rights." (Within days of Young's report, a Vietnamese court sentenced a supervisor for a Nike subcontractor to six months in prison for mistreating workers.) "Nike is doing a good job," Young opined, although he also conceded that "Nike can and should do better" in some areas.

The company apparently got what it paid for. It wasted no time trumpeting Young's words in full-page ads in newspapers across the country.

Nike's charade casts a dubious light on self-policing policies, now the rage in progressive corporate circles. Even presumably well-meaning companies have discovered that their

Continued on page 9

APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



By David Futrelle

Racism 4-ever! 7.9

Apparently taking a cue from golf legend and amateur comedian Fuzzy Zoeller, the yearbook editors at Kalaheo High School in Hawaii thought they'd spice up a photo caption with a little, er, ethnic humor. Underneath a photo of three black students lip-synching to a love song at a school contest, they wrote: "I like pigs feet! I like hog mollz! Where da collard greens? Who got da chintlinz?" Not terribly amused, the African-American Lawyer's Association of Hawaii has filed a complaint with the civil rights division of the Department of Education, The Associated Press reports. The school's acting principal explained that the caption was a mistake—"an inadvertent type of thing"—which would certainly help to explain the highly, ah, inadvertent spelling of "chitterlings."

Soap-pushing doctors 6.3

The strangest side-effect of managed care? It's turning doctors into fervid evangelists for "multi-level marketing" schemes. According to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, quite a few doctors have taken to selling Amway products as a way to earn a little money on the side. They're actively recruiting other doctors, and even some patients, to sell Amway as well, thus ensuring themselves a cut of the new recruits' profits. One New York eye surgeon, the *Journal* notes, has recruited some 30 other doctors to take up the Amway cause. And a California doctor tells the *Journal* that he's been able to recruit six patients, "approaching most during office visits after he removed an appendix or gall bladder." Jim Hayes, a Florida pediatrician, claims that "Amway is not what I want to do," but he feels compelled to take it up now that managed care has cut his \$400,000 annual salary to a mere \$300,000. Clinical psychologist Ken Cochrane—whose income just barely makes it into the six figures—is careful not to mention the somewhat déclassé Amway by name when he first approaches potential recruits. "If I approach a doctor, I say 'I have a hedge against managed care,'" he told the *Journal*. "Doctors are always interested in that."



A price on his handwriting 5.1

The fatwa may have forced Salman Rushdie into hiding, ruined his marriage and reduced his life to a meager, paranoid existence—but it has at least raised the price of his autograph. According to London's *Daily Telegraph*, "Rushdie has been named as a member of one of the world's most exclusive clubs—the Hundred Dollar Club, comprising the 30 living people whose signature alone has an immediate value of more than \$100." Others on the list include J.D. Salinger, Liz Taylor and Frank Sinatra (none of whom, incidentally, is currently scheduled for execution).

BY PETER KUPER

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE BIG PICTURE



© PETER KUPER

Continued from page 7

voluntary codes are difficult to enforce. Reebok, for instance, admitted recently that, despite trying to enforce a corporate code against child labor, its contractors in Pakistan have routinely employed children to stitch soccer balls.

"Multinationals may have consumers pressing them to pay attention to worker rights, but they live in a competitive environment that pushes them to ignore their own standards," says Thea Lee, an international economist with the AFL-CIO.

Just how, then, can consumers and those concerned with human rights know whether a multinational is really setting aside issues of profit and practicality to insure that its low-wage foreign workers aren't being mistreated?

One solution might be for outsiders to monitor multinational factories in developing countries. Young advised Nike to at least experiment with permitting independent inspections of its contract plants on a regular basis. Many human rights activists favor this approach. "Normally, workers would watchdog their own rights," says Medea Benjamin, director of the San Francisco-based human rights group Global Exchange. "But the normal give-and-take between employees and employers doesn't happen in places like China, Indonesia and Vietnam."

Still, outside monitoring is no panacea. Young was just such a monitor, and his report was full of holes. Besides, even if he had found Nike guilty of gross mistreatment, he had no power to sanction the company. The ultimate answer, says Lee, the AFL-CIO economist, "is to start with voluntary codes of conduct and then to move to the next step of binding international rules."

—G. Pascal Zachary

Topic of cancer

DESPITE OUR BEST MEDICAL WIZARDRY, WE SEEM TO BE MAKING LITTLE progress in the war against cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, between 1950 and 1994 (the last year for which data are available), the incidence rate and death rate have fallen for only four of the 23 types of cancer the institute tracks. Nine types of cancer have become more widespread but less likely to be fatal. Nine other types are becoming more common and more deadly. These include cancer of the lung, skin, prostate, kidney, liver, brain and pancreas, along with non-Hodgkins lymphoma and multiple myeloma. Elevated rates for lung cancer are, of course, largely due to smoking. The "environmental factors" that contribute to the other 10 types of cancer, however, are more difficult to pinpoint.

"So long as we continue to bathe ourselves in carcinogens in air, water and food, and in chemicals that degrade our immune systems, more of us each passing year will have to learn to live with cancer," Peter Montague writes in the newsletter *Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly*. "Unfortunately, there is a great deal of money to be made treating cancer, and little money to be made preventing cancer. And so cancer prevention today gets about one penny out of every dollar spent on cancer research." —Joel Bleifuss

Blowing smoke on clean air rules

To judge by accounts in the mainstream press, the new standards for urban air pollution announced in late June by the Environmental Protection Agency were a rare act of principled resolve by the Clinton administration. The *Washington Post*, for example, praised the president for "doing the right thing, the right way." The actual saga, unfortunately, involves little more than the smoke and mirrors we've come to expect from Clinton and Gore.

Under a court order, EPA proposed new rules in November establishing stricter limits for ozone (which causes smog) and for fine soot-like pollution known as particulate matter. To justify its proposals, the agency cited more than 100 scientific studies linking these pollutants to asthma and premature death. Even so, its standards hardly staked out the radical extreme on the issue: They were about half as stringent as those recommended by environmental and health organizations such as the American Lung Association.

They were strong enough, however, to make EPA Administrator Carol Browner the target of furious abuse from the oil and utility industries, leaked insults from the Office of Management and Budget, and disparaging comments from the White House staff and the National Economic Council. As condemnation rained down on Browner, Vice President Al Gore remained silent, having already caved in to industry pressure.

In early June, with Browner still courageously holding her ground, Gore sent his senior environmental aide, Katie McGinty, to rein her in. The White House wanted a 10-year delay on the imposition of any new standards, a 30 percent to 50 percent reduction in the proposed standard for soot, and softer sanctions for violations once the standards were in place. Browner told McGinty that, in her opinion, the proposed new rules were the bare minimum necessary to comply with the court order. When McGinty brought this message back to the White House, Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles reportedly exclaimed, "Browner's very, very stubborn, and for some reason she thinks she's got God on her side."

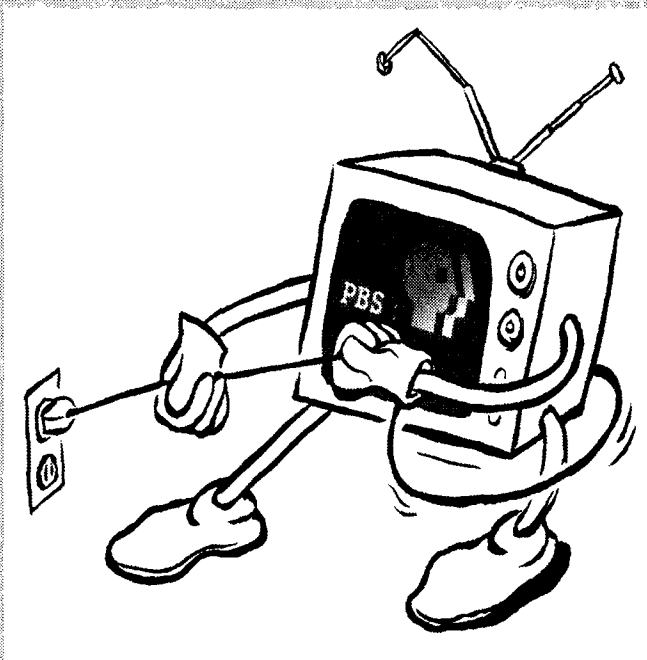
Unfortunately for Browner, nobody else was. Gore's staffers had successfully lobbied the big national environmental groups to "defend us on this one," meaning that they should leave it to the administration to determine the appropriate "bare minimum" standards.

Public television's double standard

STARVED FOR PUBLIC FUNDS, PBS HAS LONG RELIED ON CORPORATE DONATIONS TO PAY FOR MUCH OF ITS PROGRAMMING. Companies like Prudential Securities and Met Life underwrite *Wall Street Week* and *Adam Smith's Money World*. In 1993, PBS aired *James Reston: The Man Millions Read*, a documentary about the history of the *New York Times* that the paper partly subsidized. The network never batted an eye.

But now PBS has gotten its knickers in a knot over *Out at Work*, an independent documentary about issues facing gays and lesbians on the job. The network refused to air the program, which was scheduled to run on *P.O.V.* this summer, on the grounds that 23 percent of the film's \$65,000 budget came from such "problematical" sources as ASTRAEA National Lesbian Action Foundation and labor unions such as the United Steelworkers and the United Auto Workers. "We found *Out at Work* to be compelling television responsibly done on a significant issue of our times," wrote PBS Director of News and Information Programming Sandra Heberer in a letter to *P.O.V.* justifying her decision. "But PBS guidelines prohibit funding that might lead to an assumption that individual underwriters might have exercised editorial control over program content even if, as is clear in this case, those underwriters did not."

Kelly Anderson, one of *Out at Work's* directors and producers, has little patience for such pettifoggery. "It's a real blow to independent filmmaking when PBS refuses to allow funding from foundations with a programmatic interest in a film's subject matter," she says. "None of the funders in question gave more than \$5,000 to the project, and most gave \$1,000 or less. I feel like we're being punished for doing exactly the kind of grass-roots fundraising that independent filmmaking depends on." —Deldre McFadyen



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When Gore backslid, Browner could no longer portray herself as holding the line against the green fanatics to her left, because they had already agreed to be "moderate." She was essentially left with no political cover.

In the end, the White House scaled back Browner's already moderate proposal on ozone by 20 percent. In a huge gift to Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles—cities Gore will have to woo in his run for the presidency in 2000—the White House changed the formula for how smog is measured, which will permit cities to violate the standard more frequently before penalties are imposed. Moreover, in the East, Clinton told EPA to be more lenient with states that had taken action to reduce acid rain.

The standards for ozone won't go into effect for at least eight years. As for fine particulates, EPA will now delay developing its standard for five years. In 2002, new standards will be unveiled, and the cities will have two years to devise a strategy for dealing with pollutants and another ten years to meet the standards. Although the cities will be given flexibility in developing their own air pollution plans, the administration continues to push for a "cap-and-trade" approach, where pollution credits would be traded on the Chicago Board of Trade.

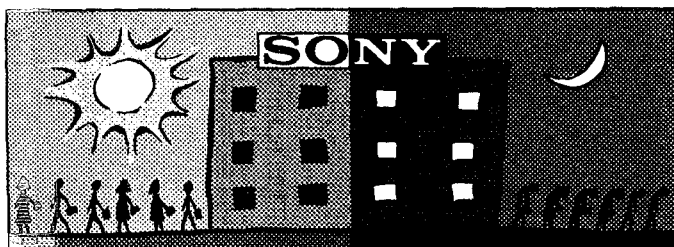
The *New York Times* noted what it called "a striking disparity" between Clinton's stance on the new clean-air rules and his performance at the U.N. eco-summit days later, where he backpedaled on U.S. commitments to control greenhouse gases. But there was no disparity. On both occasions, the message was the same: Go slow, be flexible and don't do anything to muffle the engines of economic growth.

—Jeffrey St. Clair

Overworked in Oregon

With U.S. cities and states engaging in cut-throat competition to lure corporations to their districts, who needs globalism? Ever since local and state governments began wooing companies with tax abatements and land subsidies in the '70s and '80s, corporations have become greedier and bolder in their demands. Local governments, sadly, have been all too willing to comply. In addition to tax

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breaks and even tax elimination, corporations are getting other favors, including waivers of state and local laws governing everything from zoning to labor rights.

Consider the case of Springfield, Ore. When Sony Disc Manufacturing set up a compact-disc plant in the community in 1995, civic leaders thought they had made out pretty well. After years of downsizing in the forestry industry, they jumped at the chance to lure 400 manufacturing jobs.

"Sony wanted to come here because labor was plentiful and cheap," says Cindy Armento, one of the 400 Springfield residents lucky enough to get a job at Sony. "They got a lot of tax breaks, and paid bargain-basement prices for land."

Somehow, that just wasn't enough. Before hiring any workers, Sony cut a deal with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries for a waiver of the state's overtime pay rule. According to the agreement, Sony could require employees to work 10 hours a day, four days a week, without paying overtime wages. This allowed the company to establish a harrowing work regimen. Workers complain that the company imposes mandatory overtime, which, given their already exhausting schedule, can be unbearable. "It's very tiring and stressful," Armento says. "They always work you more than the (ten-hour) minimum."

To add insult to injury, workers say, managers routinely monitor employees with video cameras and search employees' belongings after they clock out. Sony has also imposed a point system for absenteeism, which penalizes workers even for doctor's appointments. Once they accumulate a certain number of points, they are fired.

By April, Sony employees had had enough. They contacted Local 555 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and in May they kicked off a highly publicized organizing drive with a leafleting blitz outside the plant. Workers claim that Sony violated a state overtime law prohibiting more than 13 hours of labor in a 24-hour period and that it failed to disclose several

reports and other documents as required under the terms of the waiver agreement and OSHA regulations. Throughout June, workers and organizers called and wrote the state Labor Bureau, demanding a public hearing to investigate these allegations and to revoke Sony's waiver, which was due to expire in early June.

While the bureau did not agree to public hearings, it did investigate the workers' allegations. In the meantime, it granted Sony a month's extension of its old waiver. On July 3, the state announced that Sony was guilty of working its employees more than 13 hours a day. The punishment? A fine of \$17,000. Sony has appealed the fine, claiming it did not understand the law.

Despite the finding, the state renewed the company's overtime waiver. Soon afterwards, the union abandoned its organizing drive. Thus passes away the eight-hour day.

—Leah Samuel

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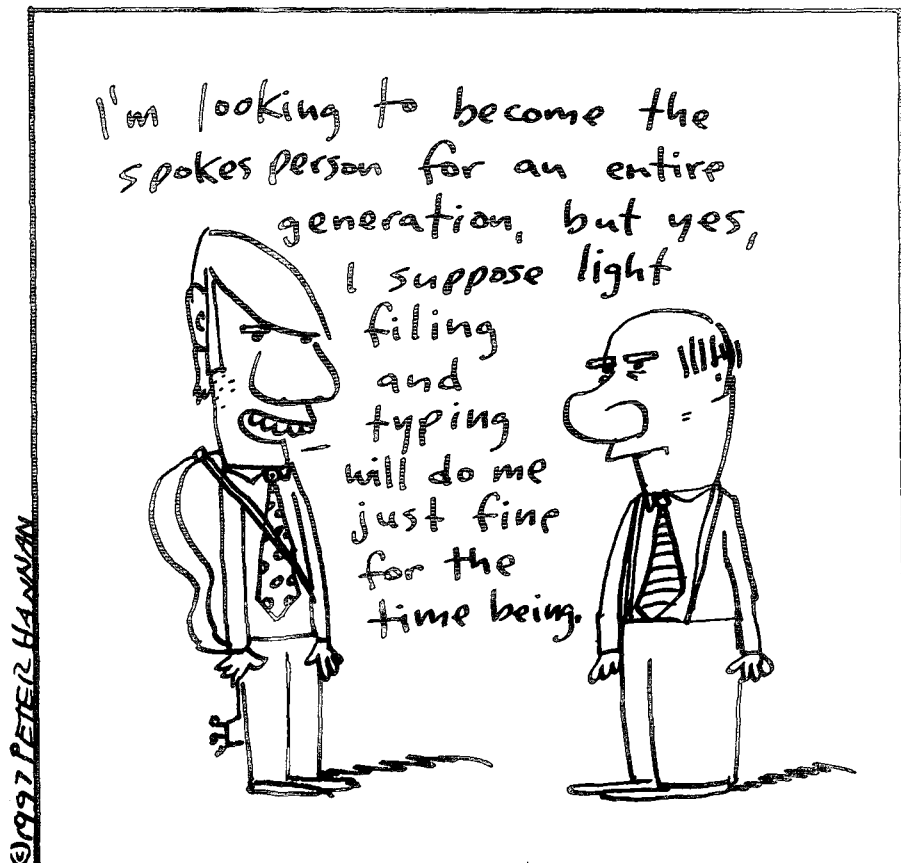
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THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



T H E F I R S T S T O N E

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

By Joel Bleifuss

A three-judge panel of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is currently considering which is more important: the survival of the world's sea turtles or the sanctity of free trade. In an effort to protect endangered sea turtles, the United States requires, through a provision in the Endangered Species Act, that all shrimp imported into the country be caught by fishermen who use turtle-excluder devices. If deployed by the entire international shrimp fleet, these devices would save an estimated 150,000 sea turtles a year. Three shrimp-fishing nations (Pakistan, Malaysia and Thailand) have responded to the U.S. initiative by petitioning the WTO to declare that the United States has, in effect, imposed an illegal embargo.

The WTO was established on January 1, 1995 to administer and enforce the multilateral trade agreements negotiated during the eight years of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). As a condition for joining the organization, a member country must surrender a tremendous amount of sovereignty. WTO regulations unequivocally state that all countries must "ensure the conformity of their laws, regulations and administrative procedures" with WTO rules. That does not bode well for hard-fought regulations to protect human health and the environment.

Whereas under the old GATT accords, nations were permitted to veto rulings that went against them, the WTO forecloses this possibility. Moreover, the 131 members of the WTO have empowered the Geneva-based entity to penalize any nation that enacts legislation that contravenes WTO regulations. Consequently, corporate interests, acting through what have become, in effect, their client states, are increasingly turning to the organization to challenge, in the name of free trade, environmental regulations that interfere with their ability to exploit the earth's human and natural resources.

"The WTO has set off the race to the bottom for environmental and health protections that everyone predicted,"

says Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. "It is just happening much faster."

Due to heightened public scrutiny, the North American Free Trade Agreement included side agreements (however ineffective) meant to protect the environment and labor rights. By contrast, GATT was formulated in a media vacuum and originally contained no provision for the environment. Responding to objections from environmentalists, the Uruguay Round, in one of its final acts, created the Committee on Trade and the Environment (CTE). The CTE's principal function is to advise the organization on how to resolve conflicts between WTO trade rules and international and national environmental regulations.

"Politically, the CTE is a sop to environmentalists, who were concerned about

the environmental implications of international trade," says Steven Shrybman, an environmental lawyer who has worked on trade issues with the Sierra Club of Canada and Greenpeace USA. "There was tremendous resistance at the WTO to considering the impact on the environment. The only concession they were willing to make was to establish this committee." In the end, says Shrybman, the CTE has concentrated not on how the WTO can help protect the environment, but rather on how to dilute those environmental protections that already exist.

Among the most pressing environmental issues that the WTO must resolve is the legal status of three pre-existing multilateral environmental agreements: the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes. These multilateral agreements contravene official WTO policy because they permit the use of international sanctions to achieve environmental goals. But rather than make a firm ruling on the issue, the WTO panels are dealing with each environmental dispute on a case by case basis. These rulings will set precedent for future cases.

Consider the sea turtle case that was argued before a WTO panel in June. Sea turtles are protected under CITES, which lists five of the world's seven kinds of sea turtles as species that are "threatened with extinction [and] affected by trade." Aware of the danger that an adverse ruling by the WTO poses to the world's sea turtles, more than 200 scientists from 25 countries have petitioned the organization, demanding that the WTO panel "not interfere in anyway with the right of countries to use scientifically developed facts—not trade or economic concerns—to identify and implement appropriate measures necessary to protect endangered species."

Charlene Barshefsky, the U.S. trade representative, attached the scientists' petition to a recent U.S. submission

to the WTO. But the administration is hardly a stronger defender of sea turtles. A coalition of environmental groups, led by Earth Island Institute, had to sue the U.S. government in federal court to compel the administration to begin enforcing the provision of the Endangered Species Act that requires all shrimp imported into the United States to be caught with boats using turtle-excluder devices.

Furthermore, when presenting the U.S. case to the WTO panel, Barshefsky's office refused to argue that the U.S. law protecting sea turtles advances the goals of CITES and therefore does not fall under the purview of WTO trade rules. Instead, her lawyers argued on the more narrow grounds that turtles were an exhaustible natural resource, and that the U.S. regulation was therefore permissible under a WTO provision that allows countries to protect exhaustible natural resources.

Patti Goldman, a staff attorney with the Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund in Seattle, explains that the United States didn't want to set a precedent that would diminish the powers of the WTO. "While the United States is a defender today of sea turtle protections, it will be a challenger tomorrow," she says. "For example, the United States has its eye on the European Union ban on fur caught with leghold traps. It doesn't want to have a rule in place that could stand in the way of its next challenge."

The WTO is also grappling with the legal status of "eco-labeling," the practice of providing information on a label about the environmental impact of the total lifecycle of a product. The most politically contentious use of eco-labeling involves wood and paper products in Europe. The E.U. currently certifies paper products that come from trees that have been ecologically harvested and are manufactured by environmentally sound processes. The United States, Canada and Brazil oppose this practice because their timber and paper industries would have to meet tougher European pollution limits for toxins such as dioxin to merit the label.

"U.S. industry doesn't want to be forced to improve its environmental performance to meet European standards," says Brennan Van Dyke, director of the Geneva office of the Center for International Environmental Law, which keeps tabs on the WTO. "They would rather take away the consumers' right to know about the environmental impact of products. Transnational corporations are trying to achieve

through international trade law what they would never be able to achieve domestically."

The WTO has already proven that it has no compunction about riding roughshod over environmental regulations. Venezuela, at the behest of its oil industry, persuaded a WTO tribunal to gut an EPA regulation that, as part of the Clean Air Act, eliminated dangerous contaminants from gasoline. Last year, a three-judge WTO panel invalidated the U.S. regulation, which was years in the making and involved substantial compromise between environmentalists and the oil industry. The WTO panel ruled that "WTO

members were free to set their own environmental objectives, but they were bound to implement these objectives only through measures consistent with [the WTO's] provisions." It ordered the United States to either pay Venezuela \$150 million a year or change its gasoline standards.

"This is part of why the WTO is so dangerous," says Wallach from Public Citizen. "Basically in this case, it allows three trade lawyers to sit in a room and second-guess the best judgment and research of our entire EPA."

After unsuccessfully appealing the WTO ruling (under WTO regulations, all appeals go before the same three judges that made the

original ruling), the United States has accepted the WTO verdict on gasoline standards and has until August 20 to comply. It has indicated that it will nullify current regulations for gasoline contaminants and replace them with an oil industry-backed proposal that EPA has on two previous occasions rejected as unenforceable, unreliable and too expensive.

The U.S. law protecting sea turtles could suffer a similar fate. The WTO panel's ruling, which is expected later this year, is likely to set a binding precedent on whether countries are allowed to implement species protection laws.

"A huge, well-financed push by corporations around the world—and a silence that becomes complicity on the part of most of the press—has allowed both the biggest power grab and the biggest environmental rollback ever," says Wallach. "If the WTO is ever implemented fully on its own terms, the implications for the environment and human health, to say nothing of our standard of living, would be absolutely devastating." ▽

Research assistance provided by Amanda Hiber.



POLITICS

The twilight of "Gang Green"

The big environmental groups that supported Clinton and Gore last fall are waking up to a throbbing political hangover.

By Jeffrey St. Clair

The giddy air of self-congratulation and hey-look-we're-back cockiness that permeated many green circles after the 1996 election has now dissipated, leaving behind a throbbing political hangover. Environmentalists are feeling jilted and ignored by the administration. "We're treated like the Christian right after George Bush's election," says Tim Hermach, director of the Native Forest Council. "They no longer have any political need to cater to our concerns and assume we have nowhere else to turn."

Even though the environmental vote was considered a decisive factor in many states in the elections, the president showed little interest in the environment in his first term, and demonstrates even less interest today. With the departure of Chief of Staff Leon Panetta and Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes,

Clinton is rarely briefed on eco-matters. His new retinue of advisers, captained by former investment banker Erskine Bowles (now chief of staff) and Gene Sperling (head of the National Economic Council), are implacably hostile to the environmental cause, seeing it as an impediment to prosperity.

Despite the more than \$6 million that big environmental groups poured into the Clinton re-election effort, the greens have largely been locked out of the inner sanctum of the executive office. Chinese arms dealers spend more time in the White House than environmentalists, who are routinely shuttled off to see bit players such as Katie McGinty, director of the Council on Environmental Quality, and the forlorn Bruce Babbitt, secretary of the interior.

It says a lot about the state of the mainstream greens that David Brower remains the most visionary, cantankerous and humane leader of American environmentalism. Brower just turned 85, but he has lost none of his fighting spirit or creativity. Last summer, he shocked his colleagues by announcing on the op-ed page of the *Los Angeles Times* that the Clinton/Gore administration had done more damage to the environment than Reagan and Bush combined. The problem, Brower pointed out, wasn't necessarily Clinton and Gore, but the environmental groups' tepid response to the administration.

At chat sessions with White House officials far down the food chain, green leaders submit few requests for action and make nearly no urgent demands. The Green Group, the loose coalition of executives from the mainstream environmental groups (known by eco-dissidents as Gang Green), occasionally meets for breakfast with Al Gore. But the gatherings are uniformly tame affairs, where the eco-leaders typically ask the Veep what they can do to assist the administration.

Meanwhile, Gore, with his sights set on the year 2000, is sedulously endeavoring to repair relations with the business classes and the labor establishment by demonstrating that he is not a captive of his eco-cohorts. Since the election, Gore has made few substantial statements on environmental issues. The more contentious the subject, the less frequently Gore touches it. Even when his former aide Carol Browner, the head of EPA, became the target of furious abuse from the oil industry, Republicans and members of the Clinton cabinet for her failure to withdraw the agency's new Clean Air rules, Gore remained quiet. Some wags are beginning to refer to the post-election period as Al Gore's silent spring.

Only months after anointing the Clinton/Gore team as the most environmentally enlightened in the history of the Republic, the Green Group banded together this June to timidly rebuke the administration for its backsliding on the

new Clean Air rules and the U.S. commitment to reduce greenhouse gases. On June 13, more than 80 environmental and health groups sent a letter to Gore and Clinton saying they were "deeply disturbed" by the administration's silence on the subject and called for a public display of support for Browner. This was followed by TV ads in New Hampshire and Iowa asking where Gore stood on the matter.

"The failure of the White House to provide any leadership on the Clean Air standards and on climate change raises real questions about what real environmental progress Vice President Gore can point to in claiming the mantle of the environmental mandate in the year 2000," Phil Clapp, head of the D.C.-based Environmental Information Center, told the *New York Times* in late June.

Gore simply shrugged off the criticism, claiming that he doesn't craft the environmental policies of the administration. "Everyone knows my views," Gore said. "But I am never going to publicly try to back the president into a corner. I have never done that, and I never will."

By bestowing so many laurels on the Clinton administration, the big environmental groups have made themselves largely irrelevant. Many suddenly find themselves lacking any real political function, except as full-time fundraising machines and reflexive cheerleaders for compromised and flawed policies, such as the new Clean Air rules.

But even that function is proving increasingly problematic, as the revenues of once mighty groups such as the Wilderness Society and Greenpeace continue to shrivel. Oddly enough, one reason for this financial malaise is the self-destruction of the Republican ultras, particularly their pin-up boy, Newt Gingrich. The Republican takeover of the Congress in 1994 prompted a surge of cash to green groups not seen since the days of James Watt, Reagan's first secretary of the interior. But now Gingrich is missing in action, Idaho Rep. Helen Chenoweth is firmly muzzled, and House Whip Tom DeLay of Texas is in disgrace. You don't score many

points beating a dead dog, even if the hound was rabid.

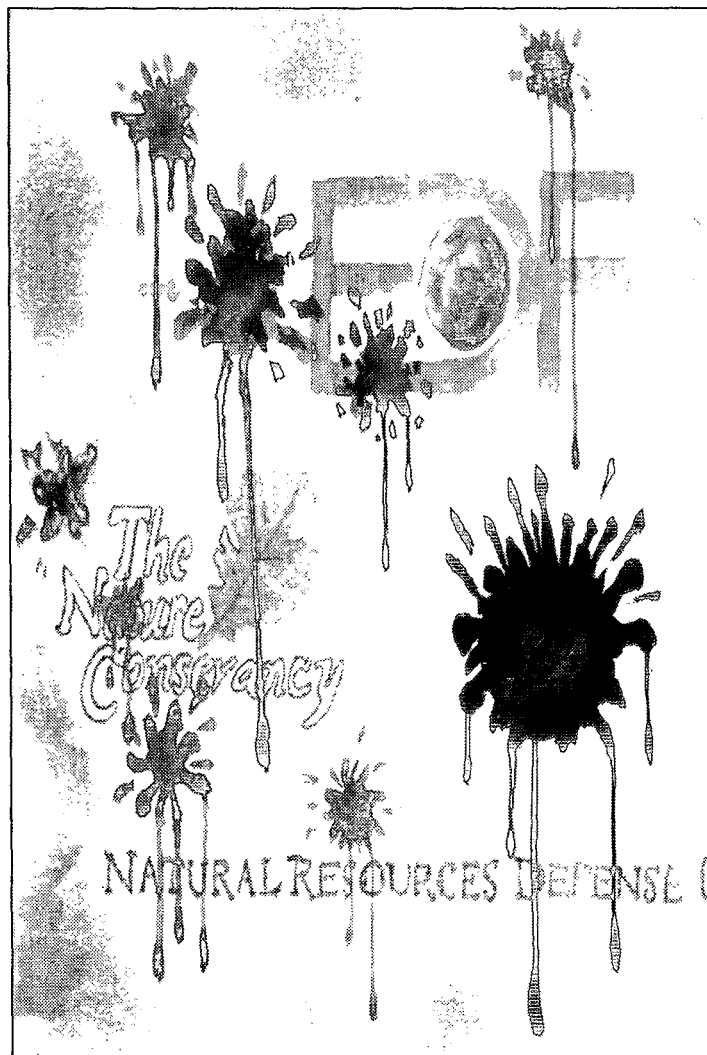
With many of their commanders discredited and their financial foundations crumbling, the mainstream greens are scrambling to reinvent themselves. The National Wildlife Federation sacked its profligate CEO, Jay Hair (who has since shown up flacking for Plum Creek, one of the West's most notorious timber firms), unloaded its posh corporate headquarters for more modest digs, and scaled back the

focus of its political work. The Wilderness Society finally shed its embarrassing president, Jon Roush, who was nabbed logging old-growth ponderosa pines on his multi-million dollar ranch in Montana. Greenpeace Executive Director Barbara Dudley, who led her group into a disastrous decision to support the gutting of U.S. dolphin protection laws, will step down later this summer after a tumultuous tenure. The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund—the most hallowed of the big greens only three years ago but now cash-starved—recently demoted its executive director, Vic Sher, and, seeking a new marketing edge, changed its name to Earth Justice. The distinguished Environmental Action was forced to close its doors forever.

All of this, of course, is too little, too late. And yet, environmentalism still has the potential to be the most powerful political force in

the nation. More than 70 percent of the U.S. electorate identifies with environmental causes, supporting tougher air and water standards, criminal sanctions for polluters and more wilderness. Even more surprising is the fact that more than 60 percent of the public would be willing to pay additional taxes to help clean up the planet. This support cuts across the political/economic spectrum, according to surveys by Democratic pollster Celinda Lake and Republican guru Frank Luntz.

With the national groups mired in their stultifying pragmatism, many smaller groups scattered across the hinterland have stepped into the breach. Largely ignored by the national media, an alternative vision is emerging, founded on a renewed solidarity between social-justice and environmental



groups on issues of corporate accountability, global trade controls, toxic emissions standards, wilderness preservation and racial equity. It takes hard work, time and patience to build sustainable political movements, especially starting from the ground up, community by community. Even so, some amazing victories have already been achieved.

In New Mexico, Carol Miller, a Green Party candidate for the House seat vacated by Bill Richardson, raked in 17 percent of the vote in May, foiling the election bid of a right-wing Democrat. David Brower's support for the Miller cam-

paign sparked an attempt to have him expelled from the Sierra Club board for insubordination. Brower survived. Last year, a renegade band of Sierra Club activists, led by Chad Hanson and David Orr, forced the crusty old organization to adopt a radical but sensible platform plank calling for an end to logging on federally-owned lands. In Arcata, Calif., a town of 20,000 in northern California, Green Party candidates won a majority on the city council.

In Los Angeles, inner-city residents from South Central, appalled that \$200 million in state and local subsidies are being diverted to billionaires, have joined in an unlikely coalition with wetlands activists and birders to fight film mogul Stephen Spielberg and his relentless push to build the vast Dreamworks studio on the Ballona wetlands.

In the southeastern United States, a loose confederation of environmentalists, hillbillies and rural blacks has emerged under the banner of the Dogwood Alliance to counter an onslaught of toxic chip mills and paper plants that have invaded the Tennessee River valley in the past five years.

In the remote town of Silver City, N.M., desert conservationist Susan Schock endured daily harassment, public ridicule and death threats in her decade-long quest to get cattle evicted from the Gila Wilderness, America's premier wild land and the stomping grounds of Aldo Leopold, a founder of the Wilderness Society. Last month Schock won, and the cows are gone.

From Berkeley, Calif., a frugal outfit called the International Rivers Network harassed the World Bank and the Export-Import Bank into withdrawing tens of millions in financial support for China's Three Gorges Dam, the largest construction project since the erection of the pyramids.

Far removed from the political shadowboxing in Washington, the battle lines for the environment have been drawn. As Simon Ortiz, the great poet from Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico, predicted several years ago: "Only when the people of this nation fight for what is just and good for all life will we know life and its continuance. And when we fight, and fight back those who are bent on destruction of our land and people, we will win. We will win."

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Jeffrey St. Clair covers environmental politics for *Counterpunch*.

Clinton's eco-record

The national environmental groups often rationalize their transit from agitating outsiders to Beltway wheeler-dealers as an act of political pragmatism. But an examination of Clinton's environmental record reveals that the big greens have gained precious little from this tack.

- The Endangered Species Act, America's premier environmental statute, has been hanging in legislative limbo for four years. Meanwhile, in the name of consensus and sensitivity to property rights, the Interior Department has used its administrative authority to sculpt developer-friendly loopholes in the law, permitting condos to be erected in California gnatcatcher nesting grounds and clearcuts in the dwindling habitat of the Montana grizzly bear. Disturbingly, policy wonks from neoliberal groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund and the Nature Conservancy secretly worked with lobbyists from industry groups to concoct a compromised rewrite of the Endangered Species Act, which will rely heavily on voluntary compliance and will reward corporations with cash for not destroying the habitat of listed species.

- Backed by millions in lobbying fees paid by the likes of Enron, the natural gas giant, deregulation of the electric utilities appears to be pre-ordained. The only big questions are how much of the liability for the nation's ailing nuclear plants will be shifted onto the backs of the public sector and how big the price tag will be for ratepayers and taxpayers. A clue can be found in California, which, with the support of the Natural Resources Defense Council, enacted a nuclear power bailout bill last year totaling more than \$28 billion. It's the old song and dance: Privatize the profits, socialize the costs.

- At the urgent request of the Clinton administration, Congress once again awarded Most Favored Nation trading status to China. None of the big green groups rose up to protest, despite the environmental threat posed by Three Gorges Dam, China's indifference to global eco-treaties, and its routine harassment and jailing of environmental activists.

- The difficult subject of the nation's energy policy receives barely any mention by the White House, the press or the big greens. Federico Peña, the new energy secretary, is the same man who as transportation secretary certified Valujet as safe and resisted new taxes on gasoline. Renewable energy resources, such as solar and wind, flounder as the government gives oil companies new tax breaks and expanded drilling rights in Alaska, the Rockies and the Gulf of Mexico.

- The environmental triumphs the administration boasted about last summer have failed to materialize. The vaunted land-swap aimed at saving Yellowstone Park from gold mining is hopelessly stalled. Oil titan Conoco recently announced its intentions to drill exploratory wells in the heart of the new Escalante National Monument in Utah, leaving Bruce Babbitt and the Wilderness Society to sit back and pray they hit dry holes. And corporate raider Charles Hurwitz continues to hold the ancient redwood of the Headwaters forest in northern California hostage to his company's chain saws. —J.S.

ENVIRONMENT

A field guide to the environmental movement

By Jeffrey St. Clair and Bernardo Issel

Few issues excite the passions of Americans more than environmental causes. Since the first Earth Day in 1970, the United States has witnessed a proliferation of green groups. One estimate by the Internal Revenue Service suggests that there may be as many as 12,000 groups working on environmental issues, ranging from small neighborhood associations to mammoth groups, such as the Nature Conservancy, that are difficult to distinguish from a downsized transnational corporation. Oregon alone counts more than 250 environmental groups, the most per capita in the nation.

Americans pour as much as \$3 billion into environmental causes every year. A sizable chunk of that money goes to the 12 large groups that dominate the green scene in Washington, D.C. With all this money rolling into the environmental movement, why has so little progress been made cleaning up the nation's hazardous-waste sites or stemming the destruction of our ancient forests? Some critics, such as investigative journalist Mark Dowie, suggest that size does matter—in reverse: The larger a group gets, the more bureaucratic and less effective it becomes. As Dowie and others have noted, amazing work is being done at the grass-roots level against tremendous odds, but these struggles are often neglected by the press and unnoticed by the larger public.

In an attempt to correct the record, we have prepared a brief consumer profile of some of the largest and most ubiquitous environmental organizations, charting their organizational history, political leanings and financial status. We have also profiled a short list of grass-roots green groups that are doing hard and vital work on frugal budgets.

Jeffrey St. Clair reports on the environment for *Counterpunch*. Bernardo Issel is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C.

The Mainstreams

Environmental Defense Fund

Created in 1967 by a small band of lawyers seeking to ban DDT, EDF evolved into George Bush's favorite environmental group. The group is the premier advocate of market-oriented solutions to environmental problems. EDF was a cheerleader for NAFTA, and gets excited about pollution credits, emissions trading systems and user fees for recreational use of public lands. It hosts the Barbra Streisand Chair of Environmental Studies, the perch of scientist Michael Oppenheimer, who advocates buying up development rights in the Third World as a solution to global climate change. EDF convinced McDonalds in 1991 to reform its solid-waste disposal practices and to move from styrofoam to paper packaging (but remained mum on quality of food, ecologically destructive ranching practices and abusive treatment of animals and workers). In cooperation with major timber companies, the group developed a "paper-use task force," whose recommendations discreetly ignored sustainable alternatives to paper such as industrial hemp and kenaf. *Inc.* magazine praised president Fred Krupp for his ability to "speak capitalism."

Budget: \$25.4 million

Staff: 160

Members: 300,000

Salary of CEO: \$262,000, including benefits

Greenpeace USA

Greenpeace sprang up in 1971 out of protests against U.S. nuclear testing in the Aleutians. The group has gained a reputation as a media-savvy, confrontational organization with a radical eco-agenda to end pollution, protect biodiversity and bring about global disarmament. It has waged war against factory trawlers, whaling ships, pulp mills and the French nuclear navy. Its membership exploded in the '80s, reaching 4.8 million internationally at its peak in 1991. Since then, it has been on the decline. Greenpeace is one of the few national groups to demonstrate some sensitivity to the social and economic problems of Third World nations. The group valiantly fought NAFTA and GATT, but recently joined forces with NAFTA proponents in support of a controversial bill to weaken U.S. dolphin protection laws. It recently smothered efforts to unionize its legions of canvassers. Earlier this year, 16 founding members criticized the group for becoming too bureaucratic, lacking focus and doling out high salaries. Ex-Greenpeace Cpt. Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Society calls the group the "Avon ladies of the environmental movement."

Budget: \$32 million

Staff: 250

Members: 600,000

CEO Salary: More than \$65,000

National Audubon Society

One of the oldest and most high-brow of American conservation groups, the Audubon Society has long been a bastion of

Rockefeller Republicans. It demonstrates a particular obsession with Third World birth rates, advocating harsh population control measures. In 1991, the group fired Les Line, the award-winning editor of *Audubon* magazine, and replaced him with Malcolm Abrams, former editor of *The Star* tabloid. The group takes in hundreds of thousands of dollars from conservative foundations, such as Pew Charitable Trusts (Sun Oil), the J.M. Kaplan Fund (a former pass-through for CIA monies) and the Ford Foundation. It has also raked in millions from royalties on oil and gas wells in its Rainey Wildlife Reserve in Louisiana. Last year, the group purged staff, including Brock Evans, widely regarded as the best eco-lobbyist on Capitol Hill. Former staffers say the new president, John Flicker, wants to turn the group into a Nature Conservancy for the birdwatching crowd. Local chapters, such as Sassafras Audubon in Bloomington, Ind., and Kalmiopsis Audubon in Port Orford, Ore., often demonstrate a refreshing degree of independence.

Budget: \$44.9 million

Staff: 300

Members: 550,000

CEO Salary: More than \$180,000 including benefits

National Wildlife Federation

The National Wildlife Federation is the largest environmental group on the planet, with nearly 5 million members. It represents the old guard of the conservation establishment, including many hunting, fishing and gun clubs stained by a history of racism. For decades, the group was largely funded through the sale of wildlife stamps. Through the '80s and early '90s, the federation was dominated by its CEO, Jay Hair, who had a passion for limousines, expensive travel budgets, swank office furnishings and political deal-making. The group has invited corporate chieftains, including Dean Buntrock of Waste Management Inc., to join its board of directors. It's the favorite charity of John Denver and big oil companies, including Arco, Chevron and Mobil.

Budget: \$80 million

Staff: 600

Members: 5 million

CEO salary: More than \$180,000 including benefits

Natural Resources Defense Council

Born in the wake of the first Earth Day, the group's early years were spent litigating the new litany of environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act of 1970 and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. By the '80s, it had largely settled into an eco-think tank and lobby shop, generating monthly blizzards of white papers. Its bank accounts are lavishly seeded by Rockefeller and Ford Foundation grants. NRDC is the favorite roost of Hollywood celebs, such as Robert Redford and Meryl Streep. It is a zealous promoter of electric utility deregulation; founding member John Bryson now heads nukeladen Southern California Edison. The group betrayed Huaroni Indians in Ecuador by trying to broker a deal allowing oil development of tribal lands. Executive director John Adams boasted that NRDC had "broken the back of the environmental opposition to NAFTA."

Budget: \$27.5 million

Staff: 172

Members: 350,000

CEO salary: More than \$200,000, including benefits

The Nature Conservancy

The titan of green groups, the Nature Conservancy sits on nearly a billion dollars in assets and is awash in cash, thanks to a tidal wave of corporation donations, much of it from notorious polluters such as Arco, Archer-Daniels-Midland, British Petroleum, DuPont, Shell and Freeport-McMoRan. The group eschews political work in favor of the relatively noncontroversial project of buying land. Calling itself "Nature's real estate agent," the Nature Conservancy purchases private land and then sells it to state and federal agencies, often, according to its critics, at a considerable mark-up. Last year, the group violated its apolitical policy to concoct the compromise rewrite of the Endangered Species Act with a secret coalition of corporations and trade associations, including the National Homebuilders Association and timber giant Georgia-Pacific. The group is led by John Sawhill, former energy aide to Nixon and Ford and a fanatical proponent of nuclear power, who has enjoyed lucrative positions on the boards of Procter & Gamble, North American Coal Company and Pacific Gas & Electric.

Budget: \$337 million

Staff: 1,200

Members: 720,000 individuals; 220 corporations

Salary of CEO: More than \$196,000, including benefits

Sierra Club

Founded in 1892 by John Muir, who preached a preservationist message that led to the creation of Yosemite National Park, the Sierra Club promotes itself as the nation's "oldest and most effective grass-roots environmental organization." It largely settled into little more than a hiking club for the well-heeled from the Bay Area, until David Brower took the helm in the '50s and led the group in great battles to save Grand Canyon, create Redwood National Park and protect Alaskan wilderness. Brower was ousted in 1969 after the club lost tax-exempt status due to his aggressive political work. The club fought hard against NAFTA and was an early proponent of environmental justice issues. It still maintains the most democratic structure of any major group, though critics, such as Margaret Young, claim the club leadership has used repressive measures to stifle dissent. Under the leadership of Carl Pope, an intimate of Al Gore, the club twice endorsed the Clinton/Gore ticket over the raucous objections of many members. The membership overwhelmingly passed a 1996 ballot initiative calling for an end to commercial logging on public lands, despite fierce opposition from the group's leaders and lobbyists. The club is currently riding the media hype of Gen-X Board President Adam Warbach.

Budget: \$50 million

Members: 550,000

Staff: 150

CEO salary: More than \$100,000 including benefits

The Alternatives

Alliance for the Wild Rockies

This relentless, fierce and uncompromising group shocked the West in 1990 with its outlandish proposal to preserve 16 million acres of land in Montana and Idaho as new national parks and wilderness areas. The alliance is by far the most visionary group working on public lands issues. Alliance for the Wild Rockies, P.O. Box 8731, Missoula, MT 59807; 406-721-5420.

Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living

The impoverished Pennsylvania community of Chester is a mecca for hazardous waste. Five incinerators—marketed as resource-recovery facilities—now loom over the town, spewing poison into the sky. Unpaid CRCQL director Zulene Mayfield, operating on a budget of less than \$15,000 a year, has led emotional protests against Westinghouse, despite death threats, break-ins, the indifference of the national greens and repeated acts of racist intimidation. CRCQL, 2731 West 3rd St., Chester, PA 19013; 610-485-0763.

Earth Island Institute

Founded by eco-legend David Brower in 1982 as Friends of the Earth, this is probably the most visionary and creative U.S. green group. It tackles a wide array of issues, ranging from sea turtle protection to helping indigenous people in Borneo fend off timber companies. Its innovative Urban Habitat project, directed by Carl Anthony, advocates the redesign of cities to make them safer and more liveable. Co-director Dave Phillips has led the fight to preserve U.S. dolphin protection laws, taking on the likes of the U.S. State Department, Mexican drug cartels, Al Gore and Greenpeace. *Earth Island Journal* is the liveliest and most comprehensive magazine covering the environment. EII, 300 Broadway St., Suite 28, San Francisco, CA 94133; 415-788-3666.

Food & Water

This small group from Walden, Vt., awakened America to the dangers of rBGH, the dairy cow hormone, attacked plans to irradiate fruits and vegetables, and exposed the dangerous levels of residual pesticides in lettuce. The group issued a ground-breaking report this year on economic concentration in the meat industry. Executive Director Mike Colby, the food industry's most feared and hated critic, eschews Beltway deal-making as "activist malpractice." He now finds himself the target of so-called food disparagement lawsuits, but shows no sign of backing down. Food & Water, RR 1, Box 68D, Walden, VT 05873; 802-563-3300.

Hoosier Environmental Council

One of the first state environmental councils and still one of the best, HEC has battled steel mills, hazardous-waste firms, coal companies, utilities, chemical agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service—and usually won. The group was working on envi-

ronmental justice issues in Gary, Ind., long before such matters became trendy and long after the funding community moved on to other "priorities." HEC, 1002 E. Washington St., Suite 300, Indianapolis, IN 46202; 317-685-8800.

Project Underground

This new group defines its mission as the protection of human rights threatened by mining and oil companies. While the World Wildlife Fund was giving an award to Shell, Project Underground was busy exposing the oil giant's ties to Nigerian death squads. The group is now targeting Freeport McMoRan's toxic mining operation in Indonesia, which has decimated the Amungme people. Project Underground, 1847 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94703; 510-705-8981.

Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly

This is not a group, per se, but an influential newsletter produced by Peter Montague of the Environmental Research Foundation. Unafraid to challenge the tactics of mainstream enviros, *Rachel's* provides cutting-edge analysis in clear prose of complex science on toxics, corporate accountability and progressive green politics. *Rachel's*, Environmental Research Foundation, PO Box 5036, Annapolis, MD 21403; 410-263-1584.

Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice

The nation's premier environmental justice outfit, SNEEJ is a seven-year-old coalition of more than 80 groups from eight states in the U.S. Southwest, at least three Mexican states and several Indian reservations. The group is led by Richard Moore, a long-time activist for Latino rights, who is battling a SLAPP suit brought by an El Paso, Texas, waste disposal company. SNEEJ is now fighting the migration of hi-tech companies such as Intel and Motorola to the Southwest, pointing out that most of the horrific environmental and economic costs of these industries are borne by poor communities and people of color. SNEEJ, P.O. Box 7399, Albuquerque, NM 87192; 505-242-0416.

Snake River Alliance

This Boise-based group has taken on nuclear-weapons production and radioactive-waste storage at the Idaho National Engineering Lab. Program director Beatrice Brailsford made former Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary's enemies list, right behind Bob Dole as DOE's most trenchant critic. This pacifist group has been so effective that a top secret Idaho National Guard security assessment labeled it a potential "opposing force." Snake River Alliance, Box 1731, Boise, ID 83701; 208-344-9161.

Western Organization of Resource Councils

This group organizes small farmers and ranchers in the West against the import of toxic waste. It also promotes the reform of archaic and destructive mining laws, challenges monopolization of the meat-packing industry, fights for family farms and develops the organizing skills of grass-roots leaders. WORC, 2401 Montana Ave., #301 Billings, MT 59101; 406-252-9672.

INTERVIEW

THE GREENING OF LABOR

An In These Times interview
with Bob Wages

Workers and environmentalists have butted heads many times in recent years over the question of which should come first: protecting the environment or protecting people's jobs. Bob Wages, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW), is spearheading an initiative within the labor movement to change the parameters of the debate and to find common ground with environmentalists. IIT editors Deidre McFadyen and Dave Mulcahey interviewed Wages in early July over the phone from his union's headquarters in Lakewood, Colo.

You are the president of a union that represents workers in some of the most toxic industries around—oil refining, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, nuclear weapons manufacturing. Describe your relationship with the environmental movement.

I think it's fair to say that historically, OCAW has had a decent working relationship with the environmental community at large since the early '70s, the beginning of what became the modern environmental movement. It has been tense at times. But we have always tried to work through issues because we view the environmental community more as an ally than as an opponent.

What are the deepest points of contention between the environmental movement and the labor movement?

The areas of deepest contention are how to get from where we are in terms of manufacturing processes to where, in the environmental community's perfect world, they'd like us to be. And the associated tensions that coincide with that.

The media and others commonly depict workers and envi-

ronmentalists clashing over environmental regulations and protection policies. To what extent are workers being manipulated by that hype, and to what extent is there a genuine conflict of interest? Given all the other factors that account for job flight and downsizing, do stricter environmental regulations pose that great a threat to jobs?

We don't think so. There are situations where the production of poisons can't be tolerated, and social decisions are made to curtail production. But overall, I would argue that the bulk of manufacturing in this country is not the victim of environmental policy or environmental regulation. Rather, it's been the victim of corporations' policies to extract more profits and invest their capital elsewhere.

Do the workers in the industries you represent see it that way, or is that more the view of the leadership?

It's an ongoing education process. I would be willing to argue with any industrialist in front of my membership—and I believe I'd win the argument—that environmental regulation has not shut down industry. We've been blackmailed too many times. Let me give you a few examples.

In the late '70s, when it was pretty clear that we could no longer tolerate the use of lead as an additive to gasoline, it was forecast that this was the end of the oil industry as we knew it. We were told the refining industry couldn't get rid of lead, that the manufacturers who produced lead would go out of business, and that jobs would be lost. We heard that there was no substantive evidence of the danger of lead in gasoline and in manufacturing in general. It was all poppycock and scare tactics. The industry survived quite nicely. We found other substitutes to increase octane in gasoline.

Then there was the Clean Air Act of 1970. We heard how that was going to shut down the industry. It didn't even phase it. Then we had the Clean Air Act amendments in the early '90s. Once again, we heard the voice of gloom and doom, but nothing happened. Now we have the new particulate standards that EPA just announced. The industry has been spending lots of money trying to persuade workers and others that the new standards will have negligible health benefits, that it's going to cost a lot of money to comply, that we're going to lose hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs. Yes, there will be a cost associated with compliance, but, honest to God, I don't believe a job loss is going to result.

The oil and chemical industries are screwing more workers to extract more profits, totally unrelated to any environmental considerations. They're subcontracting out the work, they're moving the work to other locations, and they're pitting plants against plants, communities against communities. They're trying to extract every ounce of prof-

it they can. They're doing it on the backs of workers, and they'd like to do it on the backs of the environment and communities.

There are some unions that find it easier to buy the company line than to confront the truth. I can't gloss over it. There are some labor leaders who think that if jobs are at stake, you have to err on the side of employment rather than on the side of responsible conduct.

What sorts of internal debates are raging in OCAW? Are you receiving heat from your membership for taking the stands you have?

I have, for instance, been questioned and challenged on the issue of my support for the new particulate standards. I don't consider it heat, but rather part of a healthy debate. Many companies have gone around to the members, seeking to enlist them to compel me to overturn that decision. It hasn't worked. I haven't had one request from anybody to change my position.

Should the AFL-CIO be putting together a more creative agenda, or is there another way to clean up labor's house on this issue?

We're engaged in a process right now, thanks to [AFL-CIO President John] Sweeney's efforts to appoint an Environmental Advisory Committee. We're having a fairly good discussion about these issues. A lot of unions want to tell horror stories about how environmentalists are trying to shut down their industries. You hear horror stories about what happened in the Pacific Northwest with the spotted owl and how Greenpeace has plugged up a drainpipe, invaded property or prevented ships from docking.

The reality is that the labor movement has an obligation to engage the environmental community in a dialogue, rather than expecting the environmental community to engage us. Communication is a two-way street. With communication comes an understanding of what the threshold issues are. The one thing the labor movement ought to understand is that as we're getting our brains beat in politically, the environmental community can be a powerful ally. We ought to treat them that way.

What concrete examples of collaboration between the labor movement and environmental groups can you point to as a

model for the future?

OCAW founded and funded the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, which was an outgrowth of our five-year lockout at BASF. Even though that lockout ended in 1990, we continued to support that labor-neighbor project and continued to support the environmental community in that area. The network got started because we recognized that we had allies in the community. These are not mainstream environmental groups. I'm talking about people who are active in the environmental justice community, who

want economic justice as well as environmental justice. Largely, these are people of color who are victimized because of where they live.

The environmental community and the labor community have also worked together on a lot of fairly progressive legislation, even though there were some divisions. The Clean Air Act and Superfund legislation are a few examples of that collaboration.

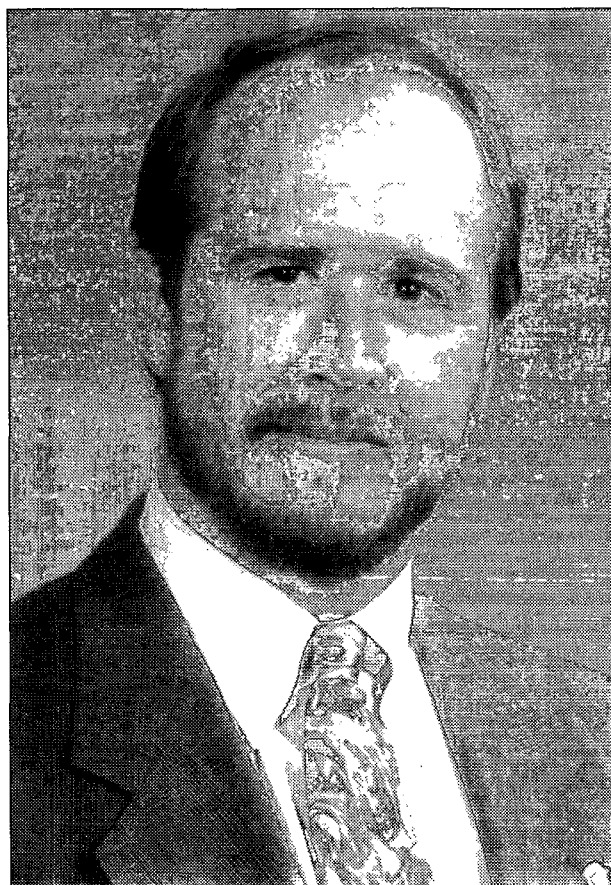
You are a member of the Just Transition Consortium for Jobs and the Environment. Explain the concept of "just transition."

Just transition is about how to move from existing production schemes to new production schemes—or no production at all—and how to treat the workers and the communities as you do that.

For example, if a particular chemical is found to be carcinogenic and has to be taken out of production,

what should we do as a matter of policy in this society? Let's say that the chemical is produced at a facility where the industry is a principal source of employment in the community and a key part of the tax base. You're immediately going to have conflict. Communities and workers are going to be at the throats of regulators and environmentalists. It's logical.

So we need a policy that moves the community and the workers through a process that protects their economic interests and creates a situation where alternative production can be considered. We propose establishing a Superfund for communities and workers who will be hurt by the change. Such a transition would be equitable to the community and to the workers. Thus the term "just transition." It's



Bob Wages, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union.

the only way to engage workers at a real level in the environmental debate because you take job blackmail out of the equation.

Given the current political climate, how do you avoid falling into the same trap as happened with NAFTA? We had the window-dressing of worker retraining, but in practice, workers who were dislocated by companies moving south received little support.

Well, you have to create a new political reality. If we brought labor and the environmental community together, it would be an extraordinarily powerful political voice. Corporate America is just laughing their asses off at everyone else. They've got the politicians in their pocket. They are able to easily divide us. Only by devising a common policy on this stuff are we going to be able to confront the powers that be. Believe me, when you sit down with workers and talk about this, they get it. This isn't esoteric. They know that if they get laid off, they've got nothing. They also know that there's got to be a better way than what happens now.

So given the current political debate, yeah, it's tough. I have no expectation of winning, but you have to believe that you can create a new political debate.

What unions have gotten on board with Just Transition, and what unions are potentially ready to do so?

I know of two unions that are actively working on this: One is the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union in Canada, and the other is OCAW here in the United States. A lot of unions don't even know about it yet. The Steelworkers and UNITE! are very interested in it. A lot of unions that participated in a recent conference we had on chlorine in Washington are interested in the concept. But it needs a lot of fleshing out. Where are we going to get the money? Are we going to fund this like we fund Superfund—are we going to make the polluter pay?

What environmental groups have you approached?

Greenpeace has probably been one of our closest collaborators on the concept. We've had discussions with the Healthcare Without Harm consortium as well as a broad cross-section of the environmental justice community.

Given that these are global industries, how does Just Transition become viable if it's something that only American unions are adhering to?

We have to internationalize the Just Transition agenda. We've been working very hard with the international trade secretary, the ICEM, to make Just Transition part of the ver-

nacular for discussing environmental issues. Ultimately, we have to set global standards. We have to establish policies that say, "We're not going to let you go offshore and produce this crap and bring it back."

But what do you do in the case of Third World countries, where the union movement is often even weaker?

Look, the demand is going to be in the developing and industrialized countries. If companies are going to move production to Third World countries, you have to ban bringing the product back in as imports. Now, are we politically powerful enough to do that yet? Not yet, but I don't think we're that far away.

What sorts of things are you doing to bring environmental groups and unions together around the Just Transitions agenda?

We will be pursuing discussion at the international level between the chlorine industry, labor and the environmental community, in order to put the chlorine issue into some sort of perspective. We will be introducing Just Transition as part of that discussion.

Debate continues within the AFL-CIO on environmental policy. We're trying to test how the concept of Just Transition responds under pressure. How do workers respond to the funding part of Just Transition? How much assistance do workers and communities think they need? All of these issues have to be field-tested at the grass roots, which is an on-going process.

Do you see signs of progress in bringing environmentalists and unionists together around a common progressive agenda?

If I didn't, I couldn't keep doing this work. I really do see progress. Everybody is out there flailing away, doing the work of the Lord as they see it. All of us now understand that those who have the power, those who are making the decisions that affect all of us, are becoming so abusive—so degrading of both the human condition and the ecological condition—that unless we come together to make a powerful political statement, we're going to continue to get beat.

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THE RIGHT

Wild Western movements

By David Helvarg

"We wonder why we have got the Freemen or the militants. We wonder why, in fact, we have got unrest in this country. Mr. Chairman, it is because our government, in fact, has got out of hand and out of line with the Endangered Species Act."

—Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) during debate in the House of Representatives, June 19, 1996

Ellen Gray, director of the Pilchuck Audubon Society in Everett, Wash., had just finished testifying at a county council hearing in favor of a land-use ordinance to protect local streams and wetlands when a man stood up in front of her with a noose and said, "This is for you."

"We have a militia of 10,000," another man told her, "and if we can't beat you at the ballot box, we'll beat you with a bullet."

Darryl Lord, the man with the noose, was an elected leader of the Snohomish County Property Rights Alliance.

"Sometimes I have a hard time telling where the militia starts and the land-use movement ends," says Bellingham, Wash., Police Chief Don Pierce. Pierce was involved in the July 1996 arrest of several Snohomish County property rights activists who were part of a larger militia group charged with possession of pipe bombs. According to their indictment, they planned to use the weapons in a war against the federal government and the United Nations.

The anti-environmental network, of which the Snohomish County Property Rights Alliance is a part, traces its

origins to a 1988 Multiple Use Strategy Conference in Reno, Nev., organized by the Center for Defense of Free Enterprise (CDFE), a right-wing direct-mail fundraising outfit linked to two pro-gun foundations. The conference organizers wanted to create a "citizens' movement" to defend natural-resource industries operating on public lands in the West. As Wise Use founder and CDFE Vice President Ron Arnold explained to representatives of Canadian timber giant MacMillan Bloedel, "Give them (pro-industry groups) the money. You stop defending yourselves, let them do it, and you get the hell out of the way. Because citizens' groups have credibility, and industries don't." Attendees at the Reno conference included Exxon, Louisiana-Pacific, the Nevada Cattlemen's Association and various right-wing activists and Reagan revolution veterans who thought the Bush administration was "too green."

In the wake of the conference, CDFE published a 25-point "Wise Use Agenda" that called for opening national parks and wilderness areas to mining and drilling, logging all remaining old-growth forests and eliminating the Endangered Species Act. Over the next eight years, much of the Wise Use Agenda and its "property rights" message were incorporated into the Republican Party platform, even as its small but militant "grass-roots" network gained a reputation for violence and intimidation.

"I think the Wise Users really want a confrontation," says Special Agent Pat Buccello, who teaches a course, "Extremist Groups on Public Lands," for National Park Service rangers. "They're merging with Christian Identity and all these other right-wing extremist groups. You see the rhetoric changing, where it is now acceptable for them to say, 'I think you ought to be shot.'"

The county supremacy wing of the Wise Use movement claims that county sheriffs have the right to arrest federal land managers who fail to respect the "customs and culture" of logging, mining and grazing on public lands. As many as 50 mostly Western, rural counties have passed county supremacy ordinances claiming local control over public lands. Several years ago, officials of Catron County, N.M., which passed the first of these ordinances in 1990, proposed forming their own militia. They had already called for all heads of households to arm themselves.

"Citizens are getting tired of being tossed around and pushed to the limit by regulations," says Carl Livingston, a Catron County commissioner. "We want the Forest Service to know we're prepared, even though violence would be a last resort."

Tim Tibbitts, a federal wildlife biologist who went to Catron County to talk with local ranchers about endangered species' protections in 1993, recalls how he was threatened. A rancher opened his car door and said, "If you ever come down to Catron County again, we'll blow your fucking head off."

Forest Service Ranger Guy Pence is careful not to blame Wise Use for the still-unsolved 1995 bombings of his Carson City, Nev., office and home. (His wife and one of his

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Ellen Gray of the Audubon Society with a valentine from the Wise Use movement.

daughters were home at the time of the second blast but escaped serious injury when they went into the kitchen seconds before a pipe bomb destroyed the family van, partially caved in a wall and sent shards of glass and sheetrock flying into the couch they'd just vacated.) Pence laughs at Wise Use leader Chuck Cushman's suggestion that environmentalists could have been responsible. "I've always been proud of my relationship with conservation folks," he says. "I'd be real surprised if one of my enviro friends was involved. My contests do not come from that side."

During his 12 years overseeing the Toiyabe National Forest, the lanky, sun-weathered ranger has canceled three large grazing permits and removed hundreds of cattle from the range in order to reduce their damage to vegetation, stream beds and riverbanks. Today, the Toiyabe, which runs for 96 miles along the eastern front of the Sierras between California and Nevada, is a showcase for ecological recovery, supporting a wide variety of wildlife including black bears, eagles, deer, elk and trout.

Pence earned the ire of the anti-environmentalists when he denied Wise Use and Christian Identity hero Dick Carver a grazing permit and denied Carver's friend Bob Wilson permission to build a mining road. Carver, a Nye County commissioner, bulldozed the road anyway, backed by armed vigilantes. He later bragged at a Wise Use rally that if one of two Forest Service rangers who tried to stop him had gone for his

gun, "Fifty people with sidearms would have drilled him."

The Wise Use movement is closely aligned with the militia movement in the West. The militias, with an estimated 50,000 participants, are the largest armed expression of the far right since the Ku Klux Klan, according to human rights monitoring groups and law enforcement sources. With little active national coordination and with declining membership since the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the militias remain unified by two primary themes: the right to bear arms and a hatred of big government. Federal misconduct at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas, reinforced militia antipathy toward the government.

In October 1992, two months after the FBI killing of white separatist Randy Weaver's wife and son at Ruby Ridge, Pete Peters, a Christian Identity pastor, called a meeting in Estes Park, Colo. Christian Identity's theology holds that Jews are the spawn of Satan, people of color are subhuman "mud people," and white Americans are the true Israelites. The 150 right-wing extremists in attendance decided to begin organizing armed groups, not primarily around racist ideology, but rather under the banner of an anti-government "Patriot" movement—thereby establishing common ground with Wise Users.

The Wise Use movement and the militias both feed off the anxiety felt by the majority of Americans who are seeing their real wages decline and job security evaporate as the U.S. economy continues to integrate into a new global economy dominated by transnational corporations. Rural America is particularly hard-hit by farm debt and by the liquidation of natural-resource industries. These economic realities and the fears they evoke aren't reflected either in the mass media or mainstream politics. Wise Use, militia and other right-wing organizers have been able to enter predominantly white, rural communities and offer people easy answers to complex problems, providing conspiracy theories and scapegoats. In areas where there aren't many "Jewish bankers" or "mud people" to use as targets, environmental activists and, more recently, federal workers who enforce the nation's environmental laws have become the scapegoats of choice.

Wise Use's claims that their members are persecuted and oppressed by what the movement calls "jack-booted federal thugs" and "nature Nazis" have gained limited credibility across the West. Their views represent the narrow spout of a conspiratorial funnel with a wide mouth in a part of the country that has a longstanding anti-government tradition. Its broadest manifestation is the "War on the West" myth that sees the Western states as a colony of Eastern capital. This belief, which is embraced by many Western politicians and businessmen, finds expression in the new "states' rights" movement. This movement, like its predecessor in the segregationist South, hopes to reclaim the power of the states to overturn broadly popular national policies—in this case, protection of federally controlled public lands.

Many public officials support this anti-federal sentiment. A staffer for Sen. Frank Murkowski of Alaska brags how, "I helped plan 'War on the West' rallies where we drew several thousand hunters, ORV [Off Road Vehicle] types and industries united against a general foe—the federal government personified by Gore and Babbitt."

"I'm there to help solve problems, whether I have to dredge a lake at Havasu, or shoot a spotted owl somewhere, or build a bridge across a creek that the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) and the Forest Service don't want us to build—whatever the issue, I'm there to help," Arizona Gov. Fife Symington told a meeting of county officials in his state.

In New Mexico, Gov. Gary Johnson met with and publicly expressed his support for militia groups and Catron County officials following the Oklahoma City bombing. He refused to meet with local environmentalists concerned about militia tactics. He claimed that the militias were there to help in times of emergency. Asked if he endorsed the county supremacy theories of the Catron County commissioners, his spokesman answered, "He's pro-states' rights."

The Wise Use movement and other Western extremist groups can also count on corporate support, especially from Western natural-resource industries. In fact, these industries bear some responsibility for spreading extremism. Since 1988, representatives of the timber industry, the Cattlemen's

Association, the American Mining Congress, the Farm Bureau Federation, the Coal Association and others have sponsored meetings and shared Wise Use platforms, conferences and strategies with county supremacists, LaRouchites, Moonies, John Birchers, anti-Indian activists and paramilitary groups.

These corporations may have believed that by using Wise Use to defend the 1872 mining law and federal subsidies for logging and grazing and as a front to attack the Endangered Species Act and other laws that limit their profits, they were controlling the anti-environmental network's agenda. In reality, they were providing a social base and recruiting ground for armed right-wing extremists.

Wise Use members have opted out of mainstream politics to fight a "New World Order" that they believe undermines U.S. sovereignty. (Defending sovereignty was the main theme of the 1997 Wise Use Leadership Conference.) Yet, ironically, these property rights advocates unashamedly advance the interests of corporations that have long rejected the concept of national sovereignty when it comes to making money. More than half the gold now mined on public lands in the West, for example, is mined by foreign-owned (mainly British, Canadian and South African) companies who, under the 1872 mining law, don't have to pay any royalties to the U.S. treasury.

The West faces real economic and environmental problems linked to growth, mining, loss of wilderness habitat and so forth. The solutions, however, will not be found in armed confrontations, but through dialogue and democratic debate among environmentalists, resource users, the region's many new settlers and elected officials. The attempt by the vigilante right and certain PAC-dependent politicians to create scapegoats and promote violence in defense of deeply embedded economic interests and prejudices can only raise the cost of creating the kind of clean, healthy, tolerant and sustainable future most Westerners desire. ▲

David Helvarg is an award-winning television documentary producer, reporter and private investigator. This article was adapted from *The War Against the Greens: The "Wise Use" Movement, the New Right, and Anti-Environmental Violence*, updated and reissued this summer in paperback by Sierra Club Books.

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By Salim Muwakkil

During the first Earth Day celebrations in 1970, white students at San Jose City College wanted to dramatize the automobile's harmful effects on the environment. So they staged a spectacle that epitomized the oblivious and pampered angst of the time: They bought a new Cadillac and buried it. The Black Student Union demonstrated in protest, arguing that the money wasted on the car could have been better spent on a practical problem in San Jose's inner city.

Such discordant perceptions have always complicated the relationship between the environmental and civil rights movements. Despite the fact that racial minorities are disproportionately victimized by pollution, few traditionally have been involved in the organized struggle against environmental degradation.

Reasons vary. Some black activists explain that

they have ignored the ecology movement for so long because it excluded them. At the turn of the century, blacks and other minorities were barred from the early wilderness preservation and conservation movements, precursors of modern-day environmentalism. Even the Sierra Club, the most progressive of the early environmental groups, excluded blacks, Jews and other minorities well into the '60s.

According to some critics, vestiges of the old attitudes remain. In 1990, a coalition of civil rights groups circulated a letter accusing eight major environmental groups—the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, the Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Parks and Conservation Association and the Izaak Walton League—of racist hiring practices. These groups conceded that they had poor records of hiring and promoting minorities, but they denied racist motives. They attributed their racial uniformity instead to the scarcity of minorities in the

pool of environmental specialists.

Seven years later, the situation has changed somewhat for the better. "Some of these groups have really made a concerted effort to hire more minority staff and appoint more black and other minority board members," says Robert Bullard, director of Clark Atlanta University's Environmental Justice Resource Center and author of several books on the issue. "But there's still a long way to go."

The problem runs deeper than hiring practices: There is a cultural gulf that white environmentalists have only recently begun to recognize. For years, the elite pedigree and elitist culture of mainstream environmental organizations blinded them to the ecological threats facing minorities. For their part, minority activists found such issues as saving the endangered spotted owl or the snail darter too abstract and insignificant compared to more urgent concerns of pollution and other quality-of-life issues.

Lately, however, the interests of environmentalists and civil rights advocates have converged in struggles that fall under the rubric "environmental justice." The environmental justice movement argues that social, political, economic and environmental issues are inextricably linked. The movement emerged as it dawned on African-American, Native-American and Latino leaders that minority communities suffer the most from pollution and benefit the least from cleanup programs.

"Slowly we are being picked off by industries that don't give a damn about polluting our neighborhood, contaminating our water, fouling our air, clogging our streets and lowering our property values," says Charles Streadit, an African-American resident of Houston and president of the Northeast Community Action Group.

Streadit may sound paranoid, but he speaks from bitter experience. In 1979, in an action that sparked what became the environmental justice movement, his group sued the giant waste hauler Browning-Ferris Industries for maliciously targeting their northeast Houston neighborhood for placement of a solid-waste landfill. Streadit's group lost the case, but while researching the issue they discovered that between the early '20s and the late '70s, the city placed all five of its landfills and six of its eight incinerators in predominantly black neighborhoods.

The Houston battle prompted similar ones throughout the nation. In 1982, North Carolina officials located a PCB (polychlorinated-biphenyl) landfill in predominantly black Warren County. Members of a broad range of civil rights groups, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Congressional Black Caucus, gathered to protest the landfill's construction. Several hundred demonstrators were arrested. While the Warren County battle, too, was lost, national black leadership became involved with environmental issues for the first time.

One of the civil rights groups that joined the Warren County protest was the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, which later sponsored the path-breaking study "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States." Analyzing census data, the 1987 study found that race was the most significant of several variables in determining the location of commercial hazardous-waste sites in residential areas. It also revealed that three out of five African-Americans and Latinos live in communities with one or more hazardous-waste sites. The study also linked African-Americans' high rates of cancer, respiratory disorders, renal malfunctions, heart disease and mental impairment to toxic pollutants disproportionately found in their communities. The commission's executive director, the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., coined the term "environmental racism" to describe the report's conclusions.

The controversial findings exploded like a bombshell within the civil rights community and instantly energized many green activists, who used this potent issue to revitalize and expand the environmental movement. In October 1991, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit took place in Washington, D.C., bringing together

650 grass-roots leaders representing more than 300 community groups from across the country. "After that conference, the movement seemed to take off," says Hazel Johnson, founder and president of the People for Community Recovery, a Chicago-based program and one of the few environmental groups based in public housing. "Organizations from different parts of the country began coordinating their activities, and things were really going strong."

Most environmental justice activists conceive of their work as only distantly related to the mainstream environmental movement. The founding statement of the Southwest Organizing Project in Albuquerque, one of the largest

grass-roots groups fighting environmental degradation and a prominent contributor to the 1991 summit, is typical of the genre: SWOP does not consider itself an environmental organization but rather "a community-based organization which addresses toxic issues as part of a broader agenda of action to realize social, racial and economic justice."

The movement's growing organizing prowess has captured the attention of polluting industries. Many industry repre-

sentatives believe it has the potential to become a more troublesome force than mainstream environmental groups. "It's a grass-roots movement, and the people leading it are much more personally involved in the issues," says John Kyte, director of environmental affairs at the National Association of Manufacturers. "It's also different [from traditional environmental groups] in terms of its aims. We have people in this movement talking about tangible survival issues."

Industry was quick to respond to this threat. At a two-day conference in September 1994, the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chemical Manufacturers Association resolved to aggressively fund research attacking the scientific underpinnings of the environmental justice movement. Soon after the conference, a number of reports began appearing that refuted the findings of the United Church of Christ study. Chief among them was a widely quoted study by scientists at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst funded by Waste Management, one of the nation's most egregious polluters.



Such negative PR has hardly broken the movement's stride. Researchers continue to uncover links between environmental degradation and social pathologies in the black community. A 1996 study at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, for example, suggested that exposure to lead in the environment may contribute significantly to criminal behavior, a finding that might help explain the high rates of crime in America's inner cities.

With the mainstream green groups under the thumb of Vice President Al Gore, their major political patron, environmental justice issues seem like the only game in town for serious activists. In fact, politicians close to the movement seem to be showing more backbone on environmental issues than anybody else. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has the best environmental voting record of any bloc in Congress, according to the League of Conservation Voters. The CBC had an average score of 76 percent during the 104th Congress, compared to an average Democratic score of 70 percent and an average Republican score of 24 percent.

That's not to say, however, that they get any credit for it. "Historically, I think, environmental organizations have defined the environment basically as a white issue," says Bunyan Bryant, a professor of natural resources at the University of Michigan and a League of Conservation Voters board member. "Here are congressional representatives who time and time again have voted in the right direction,

yet they have not received any recognition for their work."

That's starting to change. Black Caucus members are urging mainstream groups to take on issues of environmental justice. This convergence of forces helped convince President Bill Clinton in 1994 to sign an executive order requiring federal agencies to "identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."

There have been many other movement victories: The predominantly Latino residents of Kettleman City, Calif., won a court judgment blocking plans for an incinerator in their town. Black and white residents united to quash plans for a uranium-enrichment plant in Homer, La. In Chicago, Hazel Johnson's People for Community Recovery has joined the Chicago Legal Clinic to help residents drive polluters out of several city neighborhoods. Civil rights groups are now seeking environmentalists' support to expand public transit subsidies and to rid inner-city neighborhoods of cigarette and liquor billboards.

Once beyond the pale for environmentalists, these issues may help restore relevance to green politics. "If the environmental movement is going to bring about change, it can't go it alone," said Bryant, the University of Michigan professor, in an interview last year. "It's going to have to form some coalitions. Right now, the most viable movement in this country is the environmental justice movement." ◀

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VIEWPOINT

What's wrong with EPA

By William Sanjour

For decades, the Westinghouse Corporation disposed of its toxic waste at several dumpsites in Bloomington, Ind. In the early '80s, the dumps came under the aegis of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund program. While negotiations with Westinghouse over how to clean up the waste dragged on for years, EPA, in order not to upset the negotiations, kept from the public the fact that toxic air levels near the sites were more than 15 times greater than the Superfund target risk level. At the same time that EPA was secretly recommending to its staff that they wear respiratory protection whenever on-site, it was assuring the people of Bloomington that they were in no immediate danger.

This sort of behavior is symptomatic of the bigotry festering at the core of EPA. In my 25 years with EPA, I have heard countless remarks and witnessed many heartless actions denigrating environmental concerns, environmentalists, environmental organizations and, most particularly, community environmental activists. While for the outside world, EPA puts on a face of concern and caring for the unfortunate victims of environmental pollution, the agency is permeated with contempt for these same people.

This prejudice manifests itself in

countless EPA actions: in decisions to locate hazardous-waste facilities in already heavily polluted poor neighborhoods; in Superfund cleanups that ignore community concerns in favor of giving big bucks to favored contractors; in the agency's lax and corrupt enforcement of regulations governing polluting industries; and in its suppression of employees who advocate for the public interest.

Not all EPA employees are bigoted. In the early days, in fact, many people joined the agency out of a strong environmental ethic. But 27 years later,

Why is EPA soft on polluters? Part of the answer lies in the agency's disdain for environmentalists.

most of the idealists are long gone, having abandoned EPA in disillusionment. They have been replaced by careerists whose environmental ethic, if it exists at all, is subordinate to their ambition. This translates into blind loyalty to the organization, regardless

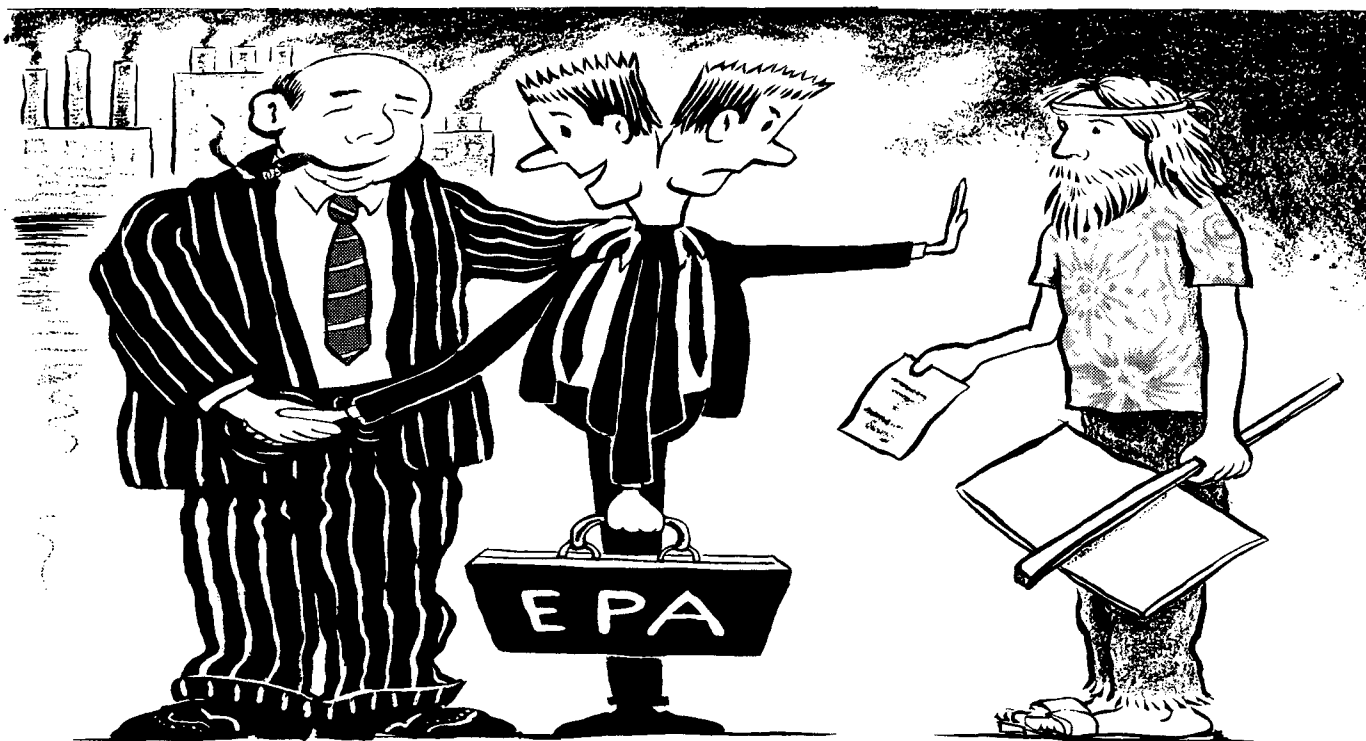
of whether it is right or wrong. The Russians have a word for these people: apparatchiks.

In the minds of EPA personnel, the agency represents the public interest. Since environmentalists and community activists also claim to represent the public interest, EPA employees view them, in a sense, as competitors. The instinctive reaction of these employees is to attack and eliminate the competition. Hard-core, loud-mouth bigots are a small minority, but a much larger majority passively shares many of the same views.

Congress and the White House have tended to view polluters, especially the big corporations, the way the Salvation Army might regard a sinner: "He's not really bad. He just needs to be reformed, shown the light and set on the path of righteousness." This attitude filters down through all levels of EPA.

EPA is soft on polluters for other reasons as well. EPA personnel are much more comfortable with industry types, who are more likely than environmentalists to share their cultural background and outlook. Many EPA staffers aspire to high-paying corporate jobs through the "revolving doors" between government and industry. For instance, former EPA administrator William Ruckelshaus (a Republican) now works for waste hauler Browning-Ferris and former EPA general counsel Joan Burnstein (a Democrat) works for Waste Management Inc. It's not, however, just political appointees who make the leap. Literally hundreds of career civil service EPA employees have left or retired from the agency to work for the companies they once regulated.

Years of neglect and condescending treatment have made communities affected by industrial pollution deeply skeptical of EPA's ability and desire to help them. These poor and often minority communities have become more organized and militant, forming literally thousands of grass-roots organizations to contest EPA's handling of their environmental concerns.



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These grass-roots groups include the Times Beach Action Group, contesting EPA's incineration of dioxin-contaminated soil in Times Beach, Mo.; Mothers Organized to Stop Environmental Sins, fighting to close a hazardous-waste treatment facility in Winona, Texas; Citizens Against Toxic Exposure, fighting EPA's botched handling of the "Mt. Dioxin" Superfund site in Pensacola, Fla.; and the Ocean County Citizens for Clean Water, documenting pollution-related childhood cancers in Toms River, N.J.

A score of professional environmental organizations have evolved to assist and educate these communities. Organizations such as Communities for a Better Environment in San Francisco, Southern Organizing Conference for Environmental Justice in Atlanta, Citizens for a Better Environment in Chicago, the North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, and the granddaddy of them all, Lois Gibbs' Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste in Washington, D.C. National organizations such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club have also actively supported the grass-roots movement.

EPA has tried to stem this tide by continually inventing new initiatives of

its own. Typically these efforts succeed in little more than spawning new bureaucracies. At headquarters, we have the Complaints Resolution Staff, the State and Community Outreach Staff, the Common Sense Initiative, the Office of Environmental Justice, the Outreach/Special Projects Staff, the Community Involvement Outreach Center, the Complaints Resolution and External Compliance Staff, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Team and numerous other communication and outreach branches. Every EPA regional office has its own Environmental Justice Staff, Alternative Dispute Resolution staff, Community Involvement staff and so forth.

While some of these initiatives, such as the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, do good work, most of them are more palliatives to blunt community outrage without changing the internal EPA policies that cause the problems in the first place. This, ironically, produces the need to create still more little bureaucracies.

One worthy EPA initiative is the Office of the Hazardous Waste Ombudsman, created by Congress in 1984. Robert Martin, the ombudsman, has gotten EPA regional Super-

fund directors to back down when citizens complained to him about the agency's policies. For example, Martin successfully intervened on behalf of the community in a dispute over a toxic dump site in Brio, Texas, in which EPA's cleanup methods would have exposed the community to more toxic chemicals than if EPA had done nothing at all. As a result of such actions, Martin is held in high esteem by community activists and is despised by the Superfund directors, who are more concerned with the prosperity of Superfund contractors than with the health of the public.

But these success stories are often short-lived. When EPA Administrator Carol Browner decided to augment the ombudsman function by creating 10 additional ombudsmen, one for each EPA region, many of the regional Superfund directors undermined the plan by insisting that the regional ombudsmen report to them rather than to Martin. Thus, EPA created a new "public outreach" initiative to kill one of the few initiatives that worked.

In a meeting last year of these regional ombudsmen, which I attended, participants bandied about disparaging and condescending remarks

about environmentalists and community activists. The head of EPA's Community Involvement Outreach Center didn't interject. I'm used to hearing these kinds of put-downs at internal EPA meetings, but I was taken aback to hear them from the lips of the very people selected by EPA to investigate community complaints. These attitudes obviously affect EPA policy. I later learned from two different communities that one regional ombudsman was using his office to isolate and discredit complainants rather than to address complaints.

EPA's cynicism and contempt for the public interest is not limited to the regional offices or to the Superfund program but is part of the institutional culture of the agency. The newspapers were recently full of stories about Browner's struggle to win the administration's approval of tough new air standards for ozone and particulates over the vociferous objections of industry. The impression created in the press and fostered by industry was of a

zealous agency hell-bent on forcing these strong standards on the country regardless of the consequences. Not mentioned was the fact that the Clean Air Act of 1970 required EPA to review and, if necessary, revise these standards every five years. EPA stopped doing so in 1979. Only after it lost a lawsuit filed by the American Lung Association in 1991 and was under court order to act did EPA write the minimal standards it thought it could get away with. The only zealotness shown by the agency was in using taxpayer money to fight in court for their right to disobey the law.

An EPA executive in charge of the Common Sense Initiative, founded to bring together industry, state and environmental representatives to reform EPA regulations, once commented to me—with a straight face—how much easier it would be to reach a consensus if only the environmentalists weren't involved.

EPA deals with its dismal environmental record the same way industry deals with its pollution: not by chang-

ing what it does but by papering problems over with slick PR. The only difference is that EPA uses taxpayer money to pay for it. ◀

William Sanjour has been an employee of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency since the early '70s, originally as a manager in the hazardous-waste office. In 1980, he testified before Congress on illegal EPA efforts to quash hazardous-waste regulations. Agency officials retaliated by transferring him to an office with no functions and no personnel. Since then, Sanjour has actively helped environmental and community organizations and has written numerous articles about environmental issues and EPA. In spite of persistent harassment by the agency, he continues to work in the public interest helping communities and his fellow whistleblowers. He is on the advisory board of the North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network and the National Whistleblower Center, and is a fellow of the Environmental Research Foundation. This article has not been submitted for EPA approval and does not necessarily reflect the views of the agency.

The Book that Exposed the ANTI-ENVIRONMENTAL BACKLASH

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I N T H E A R T S

Lovesick

G

iven the cursed conditions of Hollywood—you've heard that one before, right?—this cranky but ever hopeful film reviewer casts her eyes wistfully toward Australia, where, for decades, a near-idyllic state of movie-making has prevailed. It's the kind of system an American aficionado of the cinematic art can only dream of: pluck a few ambitious directors from the sky, give them a pile of money, and let 'em have at it. Government funding. Perhaps it's easier to practice that sort of largesse in a land of 18 million people, or perhaps the Australians are simply a more enlightened bunch than we are. At any rate, they leave the artist pretty much alone over there, and although the results are often more eccentric than inspiring, you'll never mistake the product for something that was made in a factory.

The search for the summer anti-blockbuster takes us to Australia.

By Linda DeLibero

A dose of that freewheeling independence would seem the perfect antidote to a steady diet of American summer blockbusters. But having seen two of these specimens in one week, I'm reminded that creative freedom is only a good thing if the filmmaker knows what she's doing. Both films are first-time directorial efforts from women; both attempt to gloss the finer sensibilities—not a car chase in sight. One, *Love and Other Catastrophes*, a film by 25-year-old Emma-Kate Croghan, is little more than a fluffy music video about some very pretty college kids. Maybe when Croghan graduates, she will make a passable film about grown-ups. The other, Shirley Barrett's *Love Serenade*, is another matter. Quirky in that inimitable Aussie way, the movie has flashes of brilliance, a premise rich with possibility, characters you feel are capable of surprise. For the first 40 minutes or so, *Love Serenade* looks like it's going to turn into something astonishingly good. And then everything somehow goes wrong.

The setting is Sunray, Australia, an imaginary town that is doubtless all too real to anybody who lives beyond the city limits of Brisbane or Sydney or Melbourne on that vast and dusty continent. Two sisters, Dimity (Miranda Otto) and Vicki-Ann Hurley (Rebecca Frith), wait and watch and pass the time fishing in this little burg until Ken Sherry, the ex-Drivetime King of Brisbane Radio, moves in next door. A thrice-divorced malcontent in his mid-40s, he's come to take over Sunray's shabby radio station; and without an ounce of volition on his part, he quickly insinuates himself into the lives of the two women. When Sherry lets loose over the airwaves with Barry White's cornball seductions ("Love Serenade" is the title of a White ditty) or practices Tai Chi in his backyard to "The Hustle," the sisters go all slack and loopy with desire. He's the snake in their stunted little Eden.

The joke of this black comedy is the obvious disjuncture between the women's gauzy romantic yearning and the cheap material they've been handed. Sherry (played with delightfully slimy insouciance by George Shevtsov) slouches around in his slinky paisley shirts, a parody of lounge lizardry. With his long, leathery face and hooded eyes, he's a plug-ugly sexual predator, but



Love Serenade
Directed by Shirley Barrett

©1997 MIRAMAX/PHOTO: ELISE LOCKWOOD



Miranda Otto as Dimity, one of the young
lovelorn sisters in *Love Serenade*.

the naive, love-starved sisters view his sleaze as world-weary sophistication. Before you know it, they're competing for his wan affections.

Barrett, who also wrote the screenplay, is adept at capturing the way a vulnerable and susceptible consciousness can spin grandeur from the most unpromising circumstance. Dimity pedals her bike across the flat brown landscape as the camera soars up, and the pop splendor of Burt Bacharach swells on the soundtrack. It's a moment of unlikely but exhilarating transcendence, familiar to any adolescent who ever owned a radio and wheels.

Barrett is equally attentive to the texture and detail of the ordinary. Like another fellow first-time Aussie director, Peter Duncan (*Children of the Revolution*), Barrett seems bent on revealing the dank and paltry furnishings of the Australian middle-class imagination. Interiors are cluttered with cheap bric-a-brac and are either over- or under-lit, as if the inhabitants were desperate to create a cramped alternative to the limitless space that surrounds them. It's a reaction, perhaps, to the exotic vision of Australia that directors of the '70s like Peter Weir cultivated in films like *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

But that's a problem, unless the characters become something more than pat figures in this grim landscape. You keep waiting for Ken Sherry to develop into something more or less sinister than a set of stereotypes about the masculine ego. You keep waiting for the older sister, Vicki-Ann, to become something more than a nattering spouter of daytime talk-show psychology. Once Barrett has set up her basic premise, that a

woman's susceptibility to cheap romance makes her easy prey for any guy with a phony line, she doesn't have the equipment to make us care. And when Sherry seduces Dimity, who is supposed to be 20 but actually looks about 14, what's intended to be a funny scene shades into the perverse and disturbing—kind of like *Children of the Revolution*'s attempt to turn Joseph Stalin into a figure of fun.

Halfway through, with no place left to go, Barrett is forced to rely on a piece of shabby surrealism that jolts *Love Serenade* irredeemably off course. Let's just say that there turns out to be something, uh, fishy about Ken Sherry. (Get it? Men are another species—literally.) It's a gambit that seems borrowed from Jane Campion's artily pretentious *Sweetie*, and the strategy is just as creepy and impenetrable here as it was there. That's a shame because the actors do their best with the material, and there are moments in *Love Serenade* when you realize you're dealing with a sensibility that might have yielded the sort of richness that the film's beginning hints at.

Australia's movie industry being what it is, Barrett will doubtless be given another chance. Perhaps that's the one fact to keep in mind when neither of the twin poles of contemporary filmmaking—Hollywood formula and independent quirkiness—satisfies our longing for the elusive rarity of a good film. At least there's a corner of the world where they keep on trying.

IN PRINT

The dirty truth about Mexico

By Jonathan Fox

The NAFTA debate is on again. Both sides are weighing in because the law required President Clinton to present a progress report on the first three years of the North American Free Trade Agreement by July 1—though he missed the deadline.

Joel Simon's new book, *Endangered Mexico: An Environment on the Edge*, supports those who feared the treaty would exacerbate Mexico's environmental problems. But he stresses that these problems go far beyond NAFTA. Simon, a Mexico-based newspaper journalist, convincingly argues that the dire environmental threats to Mexico's water, air, natural resources and public health are deeply intertwined with the nation's historical legacy, political system and long-term economic development model.

Endangered Mexico covers a vast and often toxic terrain with nuance and flair. Simon roves from north to south, climbing up and down the nation's steep class and ethnic pyramid. He starts out by stepping back in time to examine the incalculable environmental and human damage the Spanish conquest wreaked on Mexico. After the conquest's infectious diseases finished off most of the indigenous population, imported cattle and sheep permanently scarred much of central Mexico's landscape.

Simon goes on to sketch the longstanding crisis of agricultural productivity and erosion that drives so many Mexicans to migrate from the countryside to Mexico City, Los Angeles and other points north. Enthralled by the Green Revolution, for decades the government encouraged peasants to depend on agro-chemicals that became more expensive and less effective over time. Campesinos ended up working in the cities to cover the costs of growing corn in their villages. The government still uses its agriculture budget to buy votes with free bags of fertilizer. The ruling party has come to rely heavily on this so-called "green vote" of subordinated and hungry

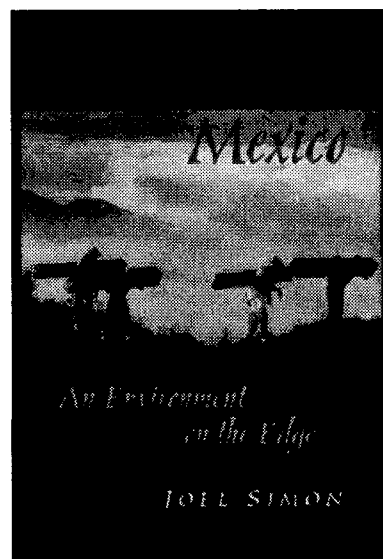
campesinos in rural areas as elections in urban areas become freer and more competitive.

Simon's next stop is Mexico City with its foul air. The pollution from cars and industry is locked in a closed basin with nowhere to go. Simon's most original contribution is his discussion of the mega-city's dramatic but largely invisible water-supply problems. Current water usage is not sustainable because of these supply problems. What the city drinks must be hauled from deep underground or uphill from lower elevations far away. Low-income women have often mobilized to force cities to deliver water to their neighborhoods, as Vivienne Bennett showed in her 1995 study, *The Politics of Water*. Do these grass-roots victories contribute to the long-term sustainability problem? How much water is being used to wash cars and water gardens instead? What will the privatization of city water mean? Unfortunately, these questions go unanswered, since Simon pays little attention to water distribution.

Simon then turns his attention to Chiapas, where on January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA went into effect, Zapatista rebels showed the world that Mexico's First World emperor had no clothes. While political repression and wrenching poverty are familiar subjects to those who follow the situation in Chiapas, Simon highlights the little-known ecological problems that also fed the rebellion.

Since the '60s, land has become increasingly scarce in the highlands, giving rise to both soil erosion and migration to the jungle lowlands. Homesteaders who moved to the burned-off forest found it poorly suited to agriculture. Ironically, those fighting for social justice often turn out to support less-than-sustainable visions of development. The Zapatista rank and file, for example, demand chemical fertilizers and tractors. Cattle are a big environmental problem in the rainforest, and rich ranchers are among the main enemies of many of the indigenous farmers. But, as Simon points out, the oppressed want cattle, too, since livestock represents money in the bank.

Unfortunately, Simon does not mention the Zapatistas' most important contribution to Mexico's environmental future: their Revolutionary Women's Law, which calls for "women's



Endangered Mexico:
An Environment on the Edge
By Joel Simon
Sierra Club Books
265 pp., \$27

right to decide the number of children they will have." This demand has begun to open up a grass-roots debate about reproductive rights in rural Mexico for the first time.

Simon's generally nuanced analysis of Chiapas also misses the indigenous movement of organic coffee farmers. This movement has the skill, experience and sophistication to process and market their crop to Europe and the United States. Coffee is Mexico's only major export crop grown largely by small farmers. Since the late '80s, the movement has become a major progressive political force, comprising more than 60,000 families in Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Veracruz. With or without organic certification, most of Mexico's campesino coffee is grown without chemicals and together with trees and other crops (unlike Colombia, where monocrop "sun coffee" dominates). Mexico's "shade coffee," the Smithsonian Institution has shown, fosters high levels of biodiversity and is therefore "bird friendly." Cooperative campesino control over production and marketing also translates into decent jobs for the local community. If a sustainable development model is ever to take root in rural Mexico, these pioneering grass-roots economic organizations will lead the way.

Turning north, Simon learns firsthand about the treasures of Chihuahua's Sierra Madre, one of North America's major biodiversity hotspots. Led by Edwin Bustillos, the 1996 winner of the Goldman prize (the environmentalists' alternative Nobel), Simon hikes deep into the territory of the Rarámuri people. Drugs for export, timber-cutting, drunken brawls and murky local politics make for a complicated whodunit.

When Simon discusses PEMEX, the state-owned oil company, he unmasks the driving force of Mexico's 20th-century industrialization. Known as a "state within a state," PEMEX has been responsible for repeated grisly but preventable industrial explosions. Once a proud symbol of national independence, the oil company has become a target for popular protests, especially in the Gulf Coast state of Tabasco. There, fishing and farming movements are demanding compensation and alternative livelihoods from the government after oil development polluted local land and water. These groups have become the backbone of a broad movement for local democratization.

Traveling to the other side of the Yucatán peninsula, Simon tallies the environmental cost of Cancún's mass-market tourism. While tourism has ravaged the reefs, it has also brought jobs and social mobility to the local population. Eco-tourism, which would do less harm to the environment, has not taken off to date, he reports. As he does throughout the book, Simon explores the difficult trade-offs between conservation for tomorrow and jobs for today.

No book on Mexico's environment would be complete without an analysis of the toxic waste created by industrialization on the Mexico-U.S. border. First drawn there to cover the environmental angle of the NAFTA story, Simon

learned how Mexico's environmental laws are rarely enforced. NAFTA institutions such as the Commission on Environmental Cooperation and the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission, created to buffer NAFTA's environmental impact, have very little to show so far. Since the U.S. and Mexican economies will become more deeply integrated, Simon argues, these institutions need to be made stronger.

In contrast to other U.S. journalists who have recently written books on Mexico, Simon is neither enthralled by insider access to ruling political elites nor entranced by guerrilla poets. His journalistic skepticism stands him in good stead, making him wary of both official and dissident versions of the truth.

Unfortunately, Simon devotes more attention to the problems than the struggle for solutions. He mentions only in passing such grass-roots environmental movements as the Laguna Verde anti-nuclear struggle and the major recent victory in Tepoztlán against a huge corporate golf course. He doesn't discuss other precedent-setting initiatives including the tenacious indigenous/NGO coalition to defend Oaxaca's Chimalapas rainforest, Guerrero's indigenous anti-dam movement and the growing binational environmental health networks on the border. Nor does he explore the lessons from difficult U.S.-Mexico coalition-building efforts either. As a consequence, readers might finish the book without a sense of the growing mass movements in Mexico that are trying to bridge the "environment vs. development" divide. ◀

Jonathan Fox teaches Latin American and Latino Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is author of *The Politics of Food in Mexico* (Cornell, 1992) and co-author of *Decentralization and Rural Development in Mexico* (Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1996).

EASY BLOOD

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in Central America

by Mike Layton

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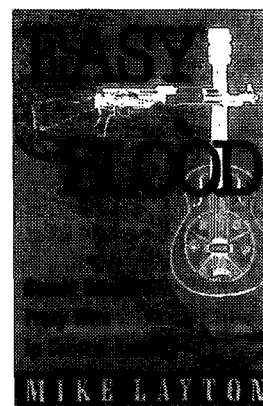
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SPEED READING

Chemicals and cancer

By Allen Spalt

Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment

by Sandra Steingraber
Addison Wesley

A Merloyd Lawrence Book
357 pp., \$24

With a poetic and powerful blend of scientific analysis and personal accounts, Sandra Steingraber explores the trends of increasing chemical use and cancer incidence in her new book, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment*.

Steingraber, a biologist from the University of Michigan, examines the many "lines of evidence" linking contamination of the air, water and soil to the increase of cancer in the industrialized world. The text is unencumbered with footnotes but is followed by extensive annotated references, an index and a guide to exploring the environmental history of your personal environment and taking action.

As I was just starting the book, a friend asked if any of Steingraber's poetry was included. (She is the author of a book of poetry entitled *Post-Diagnosis*.) Having glanced at its format, I said, "no." But my response only a few pages later would have been, "no, but....," for the book is full of images of people, situations, chemical reactions and landscapes painted in poetic rhythm and detail. *Living Downstream* contains not a single graph or chart, but Steingraber succeeds in bringing data to life in images. Studying cancer time trends, she observes, "is like ascending a glacial moraine in central Illinois. The rise is gradual, steady and real." In describing photosynthesis, she writes that chloroplasts are "scattered across the leaf's surface like tiny Quonset huts."

Steingraber probes the central Illinois farmland where she grew up, with its "plowed, black earth," "parallel arcs of scalloped moraines," and "capillary beds of creeks, streams, forks and tributaries," for the influences and exposures that shaped her life. Her homeland, she writes, is in many ways unremarkable—not necessarily any more contaminated than

where you or I grew up. Cancer-causing chemicals are now found in everyone's body and in the bark of trees thousands of miles from where the poisons were used. She brings the statistics back to the personal and human, exploring the impact on real people, families and communities.

Steingraber may stress the personal because for her, chemicals and cancer have become a very personal matter. She is a survivor of bladder cancer diagnosed when she was 20. Steingraber's mother, two aunts, two uncles and a prospective brother-in-law have also had cancer. Given that many of the family members are not blood relatives, they had more shared traits in their environment than in their genes. Their common experience was the food they ate, the air they breathed and the water they drank on farmland lying atop herbicide- and solvent-contaminated water and downwind from industrial pollution. Yet in all her years of medical treatment, no one ever asked Steingraber about her environment.

Since genetics may account for at most 10 percent of cancers, according to the National Cancer Institute, something else must be contributing to the spread of the disease, she argues. Is the explosion of breast cancer, which rose by nearly 25 percent in the United States between 1973 and 1991, primarily the result of genetic changes, which generally occur very slowly? Or is exposure to carcinogens the more important factor? Confounding the matter further is the fact that chemicals in the environment alter our genes.

Even the most conservative estimates, made by the Harvard Center for Cancer Prevention, place environmental factors as the cause of 2 percent of cancer deaths. But "only" 2 percent represents almost 11,000 deaths a year. Steingraber notes that this is more than the number of women who die from hereditary breast cancer, of children and teenagers killed by guns, or of nonsmokers who die from second-hand smoke. She notes, "It is the annual equivalent of wiping out a small city. It is 30 funerals a day."

The good news is that environmental exposure to cancer-causing chemicals and radiation is, at least theoretically, under our control. Because the increase in chemical use is the result of decisions by individuals and groups, it can be changed. It won't be quick or easy, Steingraber knows. She suggests adopting the "precautionary principle"—acting when it is prudent rather than demanding absolutely conclusive evidence of harm. She takes a human rights approach, giving the benefit of the doubt to people rather than chemicals. *Living Downstream* is a compelling read for anyone who cares about human health and wants to do something to protect it. ◀

Allen Spalt is director of the Agricultural Resources Center and its Pesticide Education Project (PESTed) in Carrboro, N.C., and president of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP) in Washington, D.C.



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Continued from page 40

faces, however, the viewer becomes the victimizer. We are implicated for our silence, for our ignorance. "During the genocide, we asked the world to help us. No one helped us," says one Cambodian man who survived the killing fields.

Silence was not America's only crime during the Cambodian holocaust. Pursuing the Viet Cong who fled into Cambodia during the Vietnam War in the early '70s, the U.S. military dropped more than half a million tons of bombs on Cambodia, killing as many as 150,000 innocent people. The Khmer Rouge used the American bombing campaign as fodder to foment their communist revolution, promising villagers revenge against the West for decimating their lives. As news of Khmer Rouge atrocities began to filter into the press, Western scholars, including Noam Chomsky, disparaged the accounts as fabrications aimed at demonizing Pol Pot's noble peasant revolution. And in the early '80s, in its effort to perpetuate the Vietnam War, the United States supported an anti-Vietnamese military coalition that included the Khmer Rouge.

The exhibit, which will be on view at the museum until August 31, comes at a time when Cambodia is suddenly back in the news. In mid-June, a mutinous Khmer Rouge faction reportedly captured Pol Pot and was negotiating with the Cambodian government about turning him over so that he could be put on trial for war crimes. Several weeks later, fighting broke out in Phnom Penh, when soldiers loyal to Hun Sen staged a coup against his co-prime minister Prince Ranariddh.

The sudden opportunity to hold the Khmer Rouge accountable may be doomed if civil war erupts and if the United States fails to vigorously support Cambodia's request for an international tribunal. But the United States will likely not champion this case, given that China, a longstanding ally of the Khmer Rouge and a prized trading partner of the United States, said it would oppose a trial of Pol Pot.

Meanwhile in Cambodia, the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge have essentially been deleted from the historical record. Cambodian schoolchildren learn nothing through official channels of the horror that gutted their country. In deference to the 1991 U.N.-monitored peace process which included the Khmer Rouge, the government expunged all references to the group from school textbooks. Two of Pol Pot's former henchmen, former Khmer Rouge president Khieu Samphan and former foreign minister Ieng Sary, have indicated that they may take part in the upcoming 1998 elections.

"The obscenity of it is unthinkable," says attorney Anne Weills, a founding member of the Campaign to Oppose the Return of the Khmer Rouge, a group of lawyers, human rights activists and scholars that has long pushed for the prosecution of Khmer Rouge leaders. "The genocidists could come back legitimized and in power."

The *New York Times* recently reported that some Cambodians believe a trial of the Khmer Rouge would be too traumatic and that the crimes of Pol Pot should remain a

matter of the past. But the Cambodian-Americans I know tell a different story. Many feel that as Buddhists, they are unfairly stereotyped as a passive, forgiving people who have no interest in confronting their tormentors. They say that the recent news has unearthed years of smothered anger.

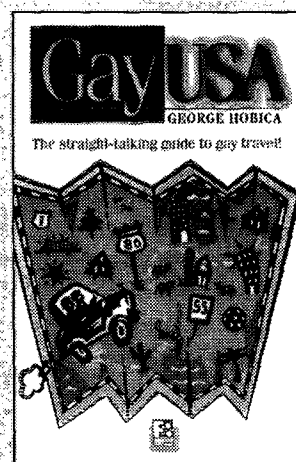
My Cambodian foster brother, who is now 27, is incensed at the notion of forgiving those who kicked, whipped and starved him and turned his country into a graveyard. "If you do a lot of bad things and then pray and talk about Zen, what's the use?" he asks. "If God forgives people like that, that's no good."

Nissay Liek, who is raising money to publish a Khmer language newspaper in Lowell, Mass., says the idea of forgetting what he lived through is insulting. "I lost my school. I lost some family. I lost my house," he says, his voice growing faint. "I still remember these things."

Under the Khmer Rouge, self-expression was forbidden. Showing emotion was harshly punished. Having an education was tantamount to a capital crime. Laughter could be cause for execution.

In the MOMA exhibit, there is one photo that stands apart from all the others. Its subject is a man who dared to defy his oppressors. If you look closely, you can see from the light in his eyes, from the upturned corners of his mouth, that he is smiling.

Adam Fifield is a freelance writer based in New York. He is writing a memoir about his relationship with his Cambodian foster brother to be published by Avon Books.



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Ghosts of Cambodia

By Adam Fifield

One girl stands stiffly, her eyes blank beneath the bruises on her forehead. A teenage boy, whose expression is as sheer as glass, seems oblivious to the plastic identification tag safety-pinned straight through his chest. Another boy, no older than 12, could be a nonchalant student in a school yearbook, if not for the heavy chain padlocked around his neck.

The children in these photographs are zombies. Their eyes are vacant as they stare into oblivion. They are the victims of one of the most brutal dictatorial regimes in history.

From 1975 to 1979, a former schoolteacher named Saloth Sar, alias Pol Pot, imposed on Cambodia his experiment in agrarian Maoism. The experiment, carried out by his Khmer Rouge rebels and ironically dubbed "Democratic Kampuchea," claimed the lives of up to 2 million of Cambodia's then 7 million people.

One of the regime's most cruel institutions was S-21, a high school in the Toul Sleng district of Phnom Penh that had been converted into a prison and torture center. During the four years of Pol Pot's rule, 14,000 Cambodians were detained at S-21. Only seven survived.

The procedure at S-21 was for inmates to be photographed upon arrival. During their internment, they were tortured, starved and pressed to confess to "crimes against the state"—which could include grieving for lost loved ones. They were then taken to open fields, forced to dig their own graves and bludgeoned on the back of the head with a hoe or pick ax.

After the Vietnamese toppled the Khmer Rouge in 1979, Pol Pot and his soldiers fled into the mountainous border region between Cambodia and Thailand, leaving behind at S-21 thousands of back-and-white mug shots. In the early '80s, the Vietnamese-dominated Cambodian government converted S-21 into the Toul Sleng Museum of Genocide, leaving the blood-stained cells and torture chambers just as they were when the Khmer Rouge abandoned the facility.

Chris Riley and Douglas Niven, two American photographers who visited the museum in 1993, discovered 6,000 photographic negatives left behind in a cabinet drawer. They raised the money to clean, organize and print the negatives, 78 of which were published last year in the book, *The Killing Fields* (New Mexico: Twin Palms Publishers).

Twenty-two of these photographs now hang in a special exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New



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York City. The faces plead mutely through the sleek frames. As you face them, you see what their killers saw. Like the killers, you know the fate that awaits them.

In 1983, when I was 11, my parents took in a Cambodian refugee, who became my foster brother. Soeuth, who was 14 when he joined our family, had the stoic presence of a monk. My younger brother Dave and I didn't know how to interpret his silence; we didn't understand when his eyes would glaze over that he was back in Cambodia wandering a terrain littered with corpses. It was several years later that my mother showed me a photograph of Soeuth taken when he was admitted to a Thai refugee camp at the age of nine. The eyes of a 100-year-old man stare from behind the face of a small child. It is this photograph that brought home to me what my brother had been through in his three years in Khmer Rouge slave camps and four years in Thai refugee camps.

The MOMA photo exhibit holds a similar irrefutable power. It is an antidote to the indifference that many Americans feel when it comes to anything beyond their own backyards. For many, the Cambodian genocide is no more than a murky chapter in the Vietnam War. As one regards these

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